

Art Price, *Birds of Welcome*, 1971
Photo by Ken Hayden, 2012.



THE PLEASURE OF YOUR COMPANY:
ENTERTAINING AT SUNNYLANDS

by Anne Rowe



THE ANNENBERG FOUNDATION TRUST
AT SUNNYLANDS

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Photo by Ken Hayden, 2012.



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The Annenberg Retreat at Sunnylands

For more than forty years, Sunnylands served as an oasis for presidents of the United States, other heads of state, international royalty, and leaders from government, business, education, science, entertainment, and the arts—a place for reflection, relaxation, and conversation.

Believing that the beauty of the setting could inspire a unique brand of informal, collegial, and productive deliberations, Walter and Leonore Annenberg created The Annenberg Retreat at Sunnylands as a venue for small, high-level meetings designed to advance world peace, facilitate international agreements, and create solutions to important problems. After a thorough renovation, the 200-acre estate reopened in early 2012 as a spectacular venue for private meetings.

The Annenbergs also wanted the public to have access to Sunnylands to experience its beauty, art, and history. Sunnylands Center & Gardens is the public access point where visitors can learn about this special place.

The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands launched a publications program to document the exhibitions featured at the Center & Gardens and to interpret the various Sunnylands collections. This volume features five of the important events held at Sunnylands—four during the lifetime of the Annenbergs as well as one that was part of the new era, the June 2013 visit of Presidents Barack Obama and Xi Jinping, which put the contemporary Sunnylands on the political map and achieved many of the aspirations expressed by the Annenbergs for the future use of the estate.

Geoffrey Cowan

President, The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands

Walter and Leonore Annenberg

Sunnylands was the winter home of Walter and Leonore Annenberg. It was their wish that in addition to the high-level retreats, Sunnylands should be accessible to the public for the purpose of experiencing the unique home they had created together.

Walter Annenberg (1908-2002) was a communications expert, diplomat, and philanthropist. His company, Triangle Publications, Inc., published the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Seventeen*, and *TV Guide* and broadcast *American Bandstand*. Under President Nixon, Walter served as Ambassador to the Court of St. James's (United Kingdom) from 1969 to 1974.

Leonore Annenberg (1918-2009) served as Chief of Protocol under President Reagan from 1981 to 1982. A consummate hostess, she welcomed world leaders and entertainment icons to Sunnylands for four decades.

Among the world's most generous philanthropists, the Annenbergs funded a wide variety of cultural and educational organizations. Their love of art resulted in a renowned art collection. Their Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings were donated to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City where they are on permanent exhibition.

The extensive research by Anne Rowe and the Sunnylands staff, which infuses the book, provides fascinating new insights into the history of the Annenbergs and their role in fostering international agreement.

Janice Lyle, Ph.D.

Director, Sunnylands Center & Gardens



Photo by Mark Davidson. 2013.



THE PLEASURE
OF YOUR COMPANY:
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AT SUNNYLANDS

January 19, 2014 through January 11, 2015



Sunnylands, the former estate of Walter and Leonore Annenberg in Rancho Mirage, California, is known for many things: architecture, design, art, the golf course, parties, famous visitors, and the high-level meetings that occurred and continue to occur there. One theme that consistently emerges in the records is that, when one was lucky enough to enjoy the coveted opportunity to dine, golf, visit, or stay at Sunnylands, the experience was like no other in the world. The Annenbergs are remembered as the ultimate hosts. Former guests reported that each and every detail of hospitality was extraordinarily custom-tailored to individual visitors. Guest lists were carefully considered for compatibility, shared interests, and for establishing acquaintances. Seating charts at formal dinners were painstakingly reviewed and adjusted with great care, and parties included couples and an equal number of single male and female guests so that no one would be without a dance partner. Jelly beans were left in guest rooms in colors that matched the décor, and books reflecting each guest's particular interests were selected by Leonore and placed bedside. Books written by other guests were also included. Biographies of guests were typed by secretaries and placed in

each guest's room to facilitate camaraderie during a weekend at Sunnylands.

Charles, Prince of Wales, was among those who enjoyed long weekend stays at Sunnylands both in 1974 and 1986. He expressed what guests consistently articulated in thank-you cards and the comments written in the guest books over forty years. A letter, written while serving as communications officer on board HMS *Jupiter*, is dated March 20, 1974:

“ Dear Mr. and Mrs. Annenberg,

How can I ever thank you both enough for that incredible weekend (all too short, as it was) at Palm Springs? Rarely have I enjoyed myself so much or had such a marvelous opportunity to relax completely as I did with you. You both have a brilliant knack of being a marvelous host and hostess and plying your guests with unbelievable hospitality—none of which is ever forgettable. After hearing so much about Sunnylands from yourselves and from Alexandra I was so pleased to be able to see it for myself and it surpassed all

Left HRH Prince Charles introduces “Operation Raleigh Explorers” at Sunnylands. February 22, 1986. Sunnylands Collection.

my expectations in comfort, taste and design. I now can't wait to see it when it is liberally decorated with your famous collection and even more beautiful than it is now. I so enjoyed meeting the Reagans—they were full of charm and great warmth and it was great fun to listen to Mr. Reagan—whether he was being serious or funny. Thank you for introducing him to me. And thank you too for so many other things, like asking Bob Hope and Frank Sinatra to come round, and for the exquisite food, which was nectar after the food on board here! And also for arranging “Anne of a Thousand Days.” I now know how to deal with Spanish Ambassadors...! I look forward to seeing you on the 13th June in London. My deepest thanks again for last weekend.

Yours sincerely and affectionately,

Charles.¹

This same level of hospitality was similarly appreciated and documented an astounding thirty years later when Supreme Court Justice, Stephen Breyer, wrote in 2004:

“ Dear Lee,

What a memorable weekend! Whisked off on our magic carpet to Palm Springs, to Sunnylands, indeed sunny with lakes, grass, flowers, mountains floating above... major works of art (I adore the Tang warriors), we find ourselves spoiled triply rotten by your brilliant, personable staff, which reads our mind, no doubt, providing us with breakfast on trays, the most delicious of meals, snacks, drinks, tea (with tiny sandwiches) and tennis, and biking, and bridge, and jogging and swimming and...but I could go on and on...And we did get something accomplished. I might add our business meetings were most successful. Indeed, you helped there too...So, thank you very much indeed. I hope to see you here—so let us know. Joann and I both send our best.

Yours ever,

Stephen.²

It was abundantly clear to those who visited Sunnylands that the Annenbergs created an extraordinary place and experience for guests. How are these anecdotal reports from former visitors evaluated within a historical context? How does one measure the true importance of Sunnylands as a notable American home?



Below Justice Stephen Breyer and President Gerald Ford at Sunnylands. February 2004. Sunnylands Collection.

The National Park Service has created designations to provide criteria to evaluate the cultural heritage of American sites. A cultural landscape is defined as “a geographic area, including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein, associated with a historic event, activity, or person or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values.”³ There are four subcategories to further organize this broad concept: *Historic Sites*, *Historic Designed Landscapes*, *Historic Vernacular Landscapes*, and *Ethnographic Landscapes*.

Sunnylands is considered a cultural landscape in two of the four subcategories: *Historic Designed Landscape* and *Historic Site*.

Historic Designed Landscape:

a landscape that was consciously designed or laid out by a landscape architect, master gardener, architect, or horticulturist according to design principles, or an amateur gardener working in a recognized style or tradition.

The landscape may be associated with a significant person(s), trend, or event in landscape architecture; or illustrate an important development in the theory and practice of landscape architecture. Aesthetic values play a significant role in designed landscapes. Examples include parks, campuses, and estates.

Historic Site:

*a landscape significant for its association with a historic event, activity, or person. Examples include battlefields and presidential homes and properties.*⁴

In other words, when we as a society evaluate which sites are historically significant for reasons of preservation, two variables are considered: the physical place and what happened there. By those criteria Sunnylands reaches the standard

of a significant American site in two categories: one which emphasizes an estate’s physical properties, and the second which prioritizes the social history of the property. That the National Park Service created a category focused on the social history of a property in addition to the property itself suggests that the details surrounding intangible events significantly contribute to our understanding of our national history. Evaluated together, Sunnylands is as much a significant cultural landscape for the diversity and importance of historical events that occurred there as it is for the integrity of its remarkable physical characteristics, archives, and objects.

The mission of The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands prioritizes both of the cultural heritage variables of place and social history. The Trust is imbued with two primary responsibilities defined by the Annenbergs in great detail: first and foremost, the Trust is to maintain Sunnylands as a private retreat center for high-level meetings of policy leaders focused on world affairs advancing the greater good (perpetuating the social history of Sunnylands); and the Trust is to provide public access for current and future generations



Left First Lady Hillary Clinton and guests in the Game Room. January 26, 1995. Official White House photo.

Opposite Japanese Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu, Walter Annenberg, and President George H.W. Bush in the Room of Memories. March 2, 1990. Photo courtesy of Toshiki Kaifu.

to understand the significance of Sunnylands through education surrounding its physical characteristics (perpetuating the importance of place).

In terms of the physical characteristics of Sunnylands, the estate provides the public with many distinct educational opportunities. The home itself, completed in 1966, reflects a landmark moment in the modernist movement through its architecture and landscape. A. Quincy Jones, noted California architect, designed this unusual home, which also features a celebrated Dick Wilson nine-hole golf course on the 200-acre, landscaped private estate. The interiors and furniture were designed exclusively by celebrated designer William “Billy” Haines and his partner Ted Graber in their signature Hollywood Regency style. Walter and Leonore Annenberg were active throughout their lives as art collectors who brought together at Sunnylands art objects reflecting their lives, their travels, and their international perspectives.

Significant social history occurred at this private residence. Beginning in 1966 upon completion of the home, the Annenbergs invited visitors to sign their guest book. The guest books reflect a broad range of visitors over a period of thirty-six years. Presidents of the United States and their families, royal visitors from Britain and other countries, world political leaders, members of the United States Supreme Court, as well as many film, music, and visual artists convened, retreated, and enjoyed private refuge at Sunnylands.

The Exhibition

In celebration of the historic and ongoing social history of Sunnylands, The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands focused on five events which occurred at Sunnylands in an exhibition held in the Sunnylands Center & Gardens from January 19, 2014 through January 11, 2015. Four of the events occurred during the Annenbergs’s lifetime spanning the years 1976 to 1990. These included (1) the wedding of Frank Sinatra and Barbara Marx which took place in the living room at Sunnylands on July 11, 1976; (2) the 1980 New Year’s Eve celebration in honor of President-elect Ronald Reagan and Nancy Reagan; (3) a luncheon in honor of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and His Royal Highness Prince Philip on February 27, 1983; and (4) an official dinner hosted by President George H. W. Bush and First Lady Barbara Bush for Japanese Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu on March 2, 1990.



The fifth event represented a significant affair occurring after Annenberg residency. This was (5) a state dinner hosted by United States President Barack Obama for Chinese President Xi Jinping on June 7, 2013. By including this event, the exhibition narrative acknowledged the active role of Sunnylands as a continuing significant American cultural landscape rather than an historic site with a finite narrative.

Three of the events in the exhibition fall between 1976 and 1983, occurring during a period marked by a significant shift in the international status and prestige of the Annenbergs both at home and abroad. Both Walter and Leonore served as American ambassadors: he as Ambassador to the Court of Saint James’s in the United Kingdom from 1969 to 1974;

and she as Chief of Protocol for the United States between 1981 and 1982. Following their residency in London, the social epicenter of the family appears to shift from their once-primary home located outside Philadelphia to Sunnylands. The billiard room at Sunnylands was remodeled into a formal dining room in 1974. In 1977 a three-suite guest wing was added to the west side of the Game Room, and the enclosure of a guest bedroom and courtyard in the main house was reimagined as the Room of Memories. Michael Comerford, who met the Annenbergs working as a butler in the American Embassy in London and then moved back to the United States with them to serve as their personal house manager for a total of forty

years, suggested that the international expansion of the Annenberg social circle may have contributed to the social epicenter shift from Philadelphia to Sunnylands. Golf and swimming in a warm winter desert setting constituted a welcome experience for newly made European friends and longtime east coast friends.⁵

This period was also punctuated by an increase in their fine and decorative art collecting efforts. They added twenty-five Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings to their collection including fifteen significant works from Walter's sister Enid Haupt in 1983. Walter said in 1991, "I really needed a place for all my paintings. My colonial Georgian home in Pennsylvania is a far smaller house, and the wall space simply could not house my paintings."⁶ A Kwakiutl totem pole and Chinese pavilion were added to the golf course in 1976 offering follies along the course not unlike what might

be seen in a formal English garden. It is tempting to speculate that the time the Annenbergs spent in England influenced the changes in the constructed and social fabric of Sunnylands. In response to their experience living abroad at Winfield House (the American ambassador's residence in London), a formal English estate in a park-like setting, coupled with their many new (and often titled) friendships, Walter seems to have become aware that Sunnylands had taken on a certain measure of significance during this period. He spoke to *Connoisseur* magazine in May 1983: "Have I decided what to do with my things and Sunnylands? Yes. Nothing will be dispersed. I plan to establish a museum of the estate and the works of art so that the interested public can see them right here."⁷



Left Dancing during a New Year's Eve party. December 31, 1990. Sunnylands Collection.

Right President Reagan being served dessert. December 31, 1982. Official White House photo.





I NOW PRONOUNCE YOU, MR. AND MRS. BLUE EYES

Frank and Barbara Sinatra recite their wedding vows at Sunnylands. July 11, 1976. Photo by David Sutton.

Walter Annenberg approached Barbara Marx in the early 1970s, during her courtship with Frank Sinatra, a good friend and neighbor of the Annenbergs. “Barbara, if you and Frank ever decide to get married, we must have the wedding at Sunnylands.” Barbara wittily replied, “Don’t hold your breath!”⁸

Barbara, born in 1927, was a former model and Las Vegas showgirl. A native of Missouri, Barbara had been married twice before: once in her twenties to Robert Oliver with whom she had a son; and once to Zeppo Marx, the youngest of the world-famous entertainment family, the “Marx Brothers,” whom she met in Las Vegas in the 1950s and married in 1959.



Frank Sinatra and Barbara Marx began their courtship in the early 1970s. They were neighbors at Tamarisk Country Club in Rancho Mirage just down the road from Sunnylands. Though their paths had crossed over the years, Barbara and Frank didn’t get to know each other well until both lived in the desert. Barbara and Zeppo wintered in the desert on Halper Lake Drive. Frank, a footloose party-throwing bachelor, lived and entertained directly across the golf course from the Marx home on the seventeenth fairway.

“After we married in 1959, my son and I moved into his [Zeppo’s] house in Palm Springs, then

a little desert town with a tremendous sense of style and glamour...But being a ‘desert rat’ took some getting used to. Most ‘rats’ played golf early in the morning, when it was cool, followed by lunch, a round of tennis, and a game of gin rummy before cocktails and dinner...The place was so full of movie stars, such as Gregory Peck and Kirk Douglas, that I almost took them for granted...I’d often nod hello to our neighbor Frank Sinatra, who lived in a house known as The Compound, when our carts crossed on the golf course...Then, one day, he called me out of the blue. His ex-wife Ava Gardner was due in town, and he’d had a tennis court built specially for her—even though she was only staying a few days. Could I organize a doubles match for her? ...By the late sixties, Zeppo and I were going out twice a week with Frank and his friends, or having dinner at The Compound.”⁹

Sinatra had discovered Palm Springs just after World War II.¹⁰ He built his first house in 1947, a Midcentury Modern home designed by E. Stewart Williams with a piano-shaped swimming pool. The town afforded Sinatra privacy. Daughter Nancy recalled “We . . . needed our jeep to manage the dirt roads, sand dunes, and tumbleweeds.”¹¹ In the 1950s when development began to explode and privacy became more of an issue, Sinatra relocated to Rancho Mirage. The Compound, as it came to be called due to its multiple building layout, was on Wonder Palms Road (now Frank Sinatra Drive) and, by all accounts, was Sinatra’s “true” home.

Barbara and Zeppo spent a great deal of time at Frank’s home playing cards, barbecuing, and swimming as part of the Hollywood party scene of the day. Quietly, however, Barbara’s marriage was failing. Frank had been single for four years following his divorce from Mia Farrow in 1968. Barbara had witnessed Frank’s relationships and dating life through the years. According to Barbara, a gentle flirtation evolved between them over time. Following Barbara’s divorce in 1973, the pair became inseparable.¹²

They attended parties and dinners at Sunnylands while dating, and Barbara became friends with Leonore and her circle. It was apparent to everyone that



Opposite The Sinatras and Annenbergs pose for a photo in the atrium at Sunnylands.

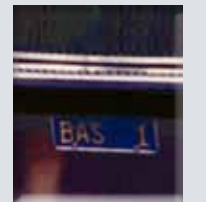
Photo by David Sutton.

Left Anne and Kirk Douglas with Barbara Sinatra at The Compound.

Photo by David Sutton.

Below Barbara Sinatra’s wedding present was a new Rolls-Royce, featuring personalized license plates.

Photo by David Sutton.



Barbara was good for Frank and that the two of them were blissfully in love.¹³ Barbara Marx first signed the guest book next to Frank Sinatra's entry at a Fourth of July party at Sunnylands in 1973. Also in attendance was Harriet Deutsch, a best friend to Leonore who became a co-conspirator in planning the Sinatra wedding just three years later. After four years of dating and "flirting with each other even longer than that,"¹⁴ Frank presented Barbara with a stunning 22-carat diamond, a unique nonverbal proposal. Barbara had been cautiously optimistic that Frank would find the courage to marry again after three failed attempts and her instincts were correct. He never formally proposed. Barbara speculated that perhaps because he had proposed three times before with less than positive results, he didn't want to propose again.¹⁵



“ I had never forgotten Walter Annenberg's promise to me about marrying Frank. The two men had been friends ever since Walter and his wife, Lee, met Frank in Palm Springs in the 1950s. I tracked Walter down in London and placed a telephone call. 'Are you sitting down?' I asked him. 'You won't believe it, but Frank and I are finally getting married.' 'That's wonderful news, Barbara!' 'We'd like to take you up on your offer to be married at Sunnylands.'¹⁶ ”

Walter responded with his typical wry humor that she should not delay to her preferred month of October, but rather she should get Frank to the altar right away, given what Walter called Frank's mercurial personality. Barbara agreed. The date was set for July 11, 1976, just two months following the telephone call.

The wedding was to be covert. Guests were told that they would be attending an engagement party for Barbara and Frank.¹⁷ Frank had long been adept at outsmarting the press and did not want their special day corrupted by press interference. Even though they tried to keep it undisclosed, the press suspected a cover-up. According to Barbara, "Palm Springs was choked with TV crews, press photographers, and reporters."¹⁸

Guests and local observers might have been aware that something more than a party was in development given the date. July is not a typical month to hold special events in the desert. Summer is considered off-season. Most members of the Sinatra and Annenberg social circle would have been traveling or residing in other homes during July and August. In fact, the Annenbergs had already decamped for the season and were only stopping over at Sunnylands July 10–12. Leonore, with her typical graciousness and generosity, told Barbara not to worry about a thing, and that she and their mutual friend Harriet Deutsch would attend to every detail of her impending wedding.

The rehearsal dinner was held the night before the wedding at Melvyn's restaurant in Palm Springs, affording the couple the ability to entertain out-of-town guests in downtown Palm Springs and to celebrate the big day at one of their favorite local haunts. Despite their efforts to outsmart the press, photographers from the *Inquirer Magazine* cleverly hid outside the restaurant and snapped a photo of the couple as they left Melvyn's at 1:00 am.¹⁹

The interiors of Sunnylands were a perfect backdrop for a romantic wedding. The living room featured modern and ancient Chinese objects; William Haines custom-made furnishings; an interior fountain featuring Auguste Rodin's sculpture *Eve*, elevated on a plinth surrounded by flowers beneath a towering skylight; and a world-class collection of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings. There was little to do



Opposite Entertainment columnist Aileen Mehle (aka Suzy Knickerbocker) interviews Rosalind Russell at the wedding.

Photo by David Sutton.

Left At the reception, Barbara chats with guests while Frank accepts a congratulatory phone call.

Photo by David Sutton.

in the way of decorating except to perhaps gild the lily by adding festive flowers for the special day. And add flowers they did. Lee and Harriet created a fragrant floral oasis, ordering in excess of \$4,000 worth of plants and blooms.

Aileen Mehle, writer of a newspaper column called *Suzy Says*, was a friend of the bride and groom, an invited guest, and the only society columnist or press representative of any kind to attend the ceremony.



She wrote:

“Outside it was 120 in the shade and humid, too; inside it was a luxuriously perfumed 68 degrees—the air filled with the scent of thousands of gardenias, white roses, white chrysanthemums and white orchids from the Annenberg greenhouses. The strains of the piano playing “True Love” also filled the air.”²⁰

Barbara and Frank traveled together to the ceremony from the Sinatra compound, sneaking across the Tamarisk fairways and entering Sunnylands through alternative gates normally reserved for staff and deliveries. Judge James H. Walsworth officiated and

Freeman Gosden served as Frank’s best man. Gosden, formerly played Amos in the popular radio comedy *Amos ‘n Andy*. The matron of honor was interior designer Beatrice Korshak, devoted friend of Barbara and Frank.

The 120-person guest list included Nancy and Tina Sinatra (Frank’s daughters), Natalie Sinatra (Frank’s mother), Rosalind Russell, Mr. and Mrs. Gregory Peck, Mr. and Mrs. Milton Berle, Mr. and Mrs. Kirk Douglas,

Ed McMahon and Victoria Valentine, Leo Durocher, former Governor and Mrs. Ronald Reagan, Mr. and Mrs. Spiro T. Agnew, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Blakeley (the bride’s parents), and comedian Pat Henry.

Marx was resplendent in a simple beige chiffon Halston gown with a stunning emerald brooch. “My ‘old’ was an emerald and diamond brooch belonging to Bee [maid of honor], my ‘borrowed’ was a lace handkerchief from my mother, and I wore a blue garter.”²¹ Frank wore a handsome summer-weight suit. According to the column *Suzy Says*, “The groom wore a beige silk tie and a brown and beige hanky in his breast pocket. He was tan and trim and very happy.”²²

The ceremony was held at approximately 5 pm in front of the fireplace beneath three French

Impressionist paintings (now part of *The Annenberg Collection* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art): a Van Gogh, Seurat, and Gauguin. Two tall Chinese cloisonné cranes with Imperial lineage flanked the fireplace, which was festooned with fresh flowers. Appropriate for the occasion, the crane is an important Chinese symbol representing both fidelity and longevity in the Chinese culture.

Following the exchange of vows, Frank provided a light moment in an otherwise emotional and reportedly very happy room. Walsworth uttered the words, “Do you take this man for richer or poorer?” Frank quipped, “Richer, richer!” and the attendees burst into laughter.²³




Opposite The Sinatras and the Pecks pose for a photo at Sunnylands.

Photo by David Sutton.


Left The chiffon Halston wedding dress.

Photo by Mark Davidson.


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Opposite Proposal for floral arrangements prepared by celebrity florist David Jones.

Sunnylands Collection.

Above left The Sinatras are married by Judge Walsworth in the living room at Sunnylands.

Photo by David Sutton.

Below left Cutting the cake after exchanging vows.

Photo by David Sutton.

“You may now kiss the bride” was followed immediately by the sound of champagne corks popping. Dom Perignon was served.²⁴ Emotional heartfelt toasts and a traditional wedding cake cutting followed near the atrium fountain. Not to be outdone in the joke department, when the couple paused to contemplate their private wishes before cutting the cake, it was former Governor Ronald Reagan who said, “If you can’t think of anything to wish for, I can give you an idea!”²⁵



Following the ceremony, guests rode in air-conditioned busses or in their own cars to the reception just down the road to the newlyweds’ own home known as The Compound where a dinner was served and the party continued. Guests exited the back gate, away from the throng developing at the main entrance to Sunnylands. Ever the thoughtful hostess, when word reached Leonore Annenberg that, although the wedding party and caravan safely snuck off property through the back gate, press and curious observers were still camped out at the main entrance to Sunnylands, she sent out trays of water and iced tea so that “no one died of the heat.”²⁶

Many of the guests changed into more casual clothing for the reception. Photographs depict a laughter-filled reception and casual dinner. A four-tier wedding cake was cut and many toasts were made. Both Frank and Barbara surprised each other with a car as a wedding gift: she presented Frank with a dark gray Jaguar and he shocked her with a deep blue Rolls Royce in a color to “match her eyes.”²⁷ The custom license plate was already in place: BAS 1 to reflect her new name, Barbara Ann Sinatra. According to Chuck Scardina, chief photographer for *The Desert Sun*, “the party was still going on when my wife Dorothy and I left about 10 p.m.”²⁸

Frank passed away in 1998 at the age of eighty-two with Barbara by his side. By all accounts, theirs was a full and devoted twenty-two-year marriage of constant companionship and love:

“ He was always so sweet, loving, and so adorable to me and he made me feel fulfilled. I had everything that I wanted and needed. When he was with me, he made me feel like I was everything and his. His love for me and his attention and his time and his gifts, his warmth and understanding made me feel very secure and in love!²⁹ ”



Opposite left
Frank Sinatra and Milton Berle
in discussion at the reception.
Photo by David Sutton.

Opposite right
Barbara Sinatra and Morton
Downey Sr. at the reception.
Photo by David Sutton.

Left This photo with an
inscription in the frame was a
gift to the Annenbergs.
Sunnylands Collection.

Below A letter from Barbara
Sinatra to the Annenbergs
written shortly after Frank’s
death in 1998.
Sunnylands Collection.

6-19-98
Barbara Sinatra
Dear Lee and Walter
Thank you for your lovely note. Your words
were a real comfort and I appreciate your
thoughtfulness at this very difficult time. The
love and affection from so many of our dear friends
has helped me a great deal Thank you both
for being so special to Frank and me over the
years. We've shared wonderful times with you -
but none more special than our wedding at
your beautiful Sunnylands.
With my love to you both always, Barbara

HAPPY NEW YEAR, MR. PRESIDENT

The Reagans and Annenbergs pose for a photograph on December 31, 1983.
Official White House photo.

There are parties that have taken place over the last fifty years in the United States that somehow achieve notoriety with those who keep an eye on the elite social scene and then enter the greater cultural consciousness as well. Truman Capote's Black and White Ball, held in New York City in 1966, is certainly one of those seminal events. Similarly, the annual *Vanity Fair* magazine-sponsored party following the Academy Awards ceremony holds special fascination for those who enjoy tracking the Hollywood crowd. There are simply some parties that suddenly erupt or slowly evolve into more than what might have been imagined. These become the parties one on the social circuit should not miss. Such was the case in what became the annual New Year's Eve party hosted by the Annenbergs at Sunnylands. Brooke Astor, one of New York's grandest twentieth-century socialites, proclaimed that an invitation to Sunnylands "was the greatest invitation one could ever have."³⁰



Perhaps it was the unique and magical setting of Sunnylands. Or perhaps it was the unusual intersection of Hollywood royalty, business tycoons, and political power couples celebrating together once a year in the same place at the same time. Whatever the case, the annual New Year's Eve party at Sunnylands grew into the "it" party. Reading through the guest lists and how they evolved over time, one can only imagine what these parties must have been like. The Annenbergs were known for spoiling their guests with lavish

hospitality. That said, Leonore Annenberg understood the true secret to a tremendously successful party. According to American Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Robert D. McFadden:

“Mrs. Annenberg believed the right guests were vital to a hostess's success. ‘The key ingredients are first of all to have interesting people,’ she said. ‘Then you try to put together an ambience of good food, and attractive table settings. But all of that would be unimportant if you didn't have interesting people.’³¹”

Sunnylands is designed for entertaining on a grand scale. The arrival choreography, from the moment one's car passes through the imposing gates on Frank Sinatra Drive, is designed to dazzle. One drives up a slight grade with only verdant landscape in view, punctuated by waterfowl at lakeside, copious flower plantings, and sculpture on the grounds. The pink, pyramidal-roofed house reveals itself slowly at a distance framed by the backdrop of the soaring San Jacinto Mountains. The driveway approach features a breathtaking monument: a cylindrical, twenty-foot bronze column with sculpted relief and a cascading fountain. The arrival driveway itself is a perfect circle composed of hand-laid, gleaming white pebbles beneath a dramatic coffered overhanging eave. Once the eleven-foot doors open, visitors are awed by the public spaces within the atrium that soars both vertically and horizontally.

The Annenbergs began entertaining at Sunnylands following its completion in 1966. The guest book indicates that, in the early years, New Year's Eve parties were relatively small gatherings of ten or twenty and occurred sporadically. Small groups of family and friends gathered for dinner and revelry with different guest lists assembled each year. In addition to the closest inner circle of friends, including the Reagans on many occasions, guests over the years included Mr. and Mrs. Red Skelton, Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Bergen, and former publisher of *The Paris Review*, Drue Heinz. It appears that the Annenbergs also attended parties at other locations or stayed home in some of those early years, given the lack of signatures in the guest book on New Year's Eve during that time.



Opposite Bob Hope and President-elect Reagan. December 31, 1980.

Sunnylands Collection.

Left Ronald and Nancy Reagan recline on the lower terrace at Sunnylands. Marine One, the helicopter, can be seen in the background. December 31, 1981.

Official White House photo.

We can piece together the calendar of events that occurred at Sunnylands due to the Annenbergs's attention to detail. Thankfully, the Annenbergs directed their staff to retain the records documenting nearly all of the guests, menus, flower orders, guest-room assignments, movies shown, and all other activities that occurred at Sunnylands over the years. This archival activity could be attributed to the fact that the Annenbergs began to speak of donating the estate to the public in some form as early as 1976—a mere ten years following the construction of the home. They left behind organized files and black binders specifically dedicated to chronicling every operational detail of the New Year's Eve parties beginning in 1975. The records indicate that in that first year of larger-scale entertaining fifty-two guests attended the sit-down dinner and party and there were seven houseguests:



“ House guests arr. Dec. 30

Ambassador Ardeshir Zahedi (arriving by private plane) [Iranian Ambassador to the United States]
Mr. & Mrs. Heinz (arr. 7:11 p.m.)
Gov. & Mrs. Reagan (no time)
Mr. & Mrs. Abboud (arr. 11:38 a.m.) ”

There is no record of a New Year's Eve party for 1976. In 1977, there were fifty in attendance. There were fifty in attendance again in 1978 and forty attended the party in 1979. And then there was the New Year's Eve party of 1980 which launched an entirely new era.

According to the guest book signatures and guest lists, Ronald and Nancy Reagan spent New Year's Eve at Sunnylands beginning in 1975, and attended in 1977 and 1979. Sunnylands played host to the President and his inner circle every year throughout both terms spent in the White House, and the Reagans continued to attend into the 1990s attending 1990 through 1993. Nancy continued to attend after President Reagan's passing in 2004.

With Ronald Reagan's election in November 1980, this particular New Year's Eve party was an exhilarating evening at which the historic role of Sunnylands changed from a private retreat for friends to a “Camp David of the West.” The guest list comprised sixty names representing an incredible “who's who” of notables across many industries and interests. The list included dear friends Alfred and Betsy Bloomingdale, he of the department store chain and founder of Diners Club; Armand and Harriet Deutsch, he the grandson of the former chairman of the board of Sears Roebuck; close friend and designer (and future Reagan White House designer), Ted Graber; William and Betty Wilson; and Charles and Carol Price. President Reagan would later appoint Charles as the ambassador to the United Kingdom following in Walter Annenberg's footsteps.

Hollywood was also well represented that evening. Guests included Jimmy Stewart and his wife Gloria; Hal Wallis who produced the film, *Casablanca*; and Bob and Dolores Hope. Mervyn LeRoy, the film director, was also in attendance. He had introduced the Reagans to one another.

Business leaders across industries with their wives were represented as well. Stanton Avery, of Avery labels; Justin Dart, of the Rexall drugstores and Kraft Food fortune; Earle Jorgensen, steel magnate and future member of President Reagan's inner circle of advisors known as the “kitchen cabinet”; William

Opposite Tables set for New Year's Eve. 1980.
Sunnylands Collection.

Below President Reagan dancing with Leonore Annenberg. First Lady Nancy Reagan dancing with Walter Annenberg.
December 31, 1981.
Official White House photo.



To see & Walter -
@ very special New Years at Sunnylands -
our love Nancy & Ron

French Smith, Reagan's personal lawyer and later his first attorney general; John Sinn, the future president of the board of directors for Eisenhower Medical Center; and John Swearingen, chairman of the board of the Standard Oil Company, Inc. Other colorful and notable jet-set friends attended that evening. Jerry Zipkin, who came alone, was later memorialized by *The New York Times* upon his death in 1995:

“ He was a longtime friend, escort and confidant of Nancy Reagan and a member of the Reagans' intimate coterie during their years in the White House, when he commuted to Washington about once a week. He was with the Reagans the night Ronald Reagan was elected President, and he was on the phone almost daily with Mrs. Reagan, exchanging news and gossip.³² ”



This particular party introduced what the Annenbergs themselves came to call “The Reagan Years.” In fact, former house manager Michael Comerford reports that even though subsequent guest lists swelled with famous and powerful names, the New Year's Eve party of 1980, kicking off 1981 was “the most electric” of them all, given that Reagan was due to be sworn in as the fortieth president of the United States just three weeks later, on January 20, 1981.

The Annenbergs clearly recognized the historical significance the party assumed with the president-elect in attendance. Leonore directed Michael Comerford to discreetly photo-document the party—a job responsibility he fulfilled from that point forward. Prior to 1981, staff photography and photo-documentation of people and events within the private walls of Sunnylands had been strictly taboo.³³ Given that Reagan had not been sworn in at the time of the 1980 party, no White House photographer was present to document the evening. Hence, that particular evening is not represented in White House photographs. The Sunnylands archive holds an abundance of photos from Michael Comerford's camera and other personal cameras as well as official White House photographs from each New Year's Eve party weekend after 1980.

Physical manifestations of presidential protocol in that first year were immediate: the Secret Service was discreetly in attendance and the Sunnylands internal security protocols were now augmented and overseen by the White House. There were other changes as well: food preparation and handling were now observed with a concern for safety, and staff background checks were scrutinized at a higher level.

Even with the heightened concern for security, the following year a gate crasher successfully fooled the gate staff. She made her way past the guarded gate and up the storied drive to the valet positioned on the circular drive. This elegant, beautiful, tall, and well-dressed woman donning a long black velvet gown with a single strand of pearls announced to Michael Comerford at the check-in table that she was Johanna, the wife of the Secretary of the Interior, William P. Clark, Jr. Leonore Annenberg was standing nearby and knew this to be untrue and signaled to the Secret Service guards. She was summarily escorted off the property. The atmosphere in the room changed as all activity was stopped for forty-five minutes while the Secret Service regrouped, swept the grounds, and added security



Opposite A New Year's Eve cake celebrates the culmination of “The Reagan Years.” December 31, 1988.
Sunnylands Collection.

Above The Reagans and Annenbergs pose for a photo. December 31, 1980.
Sunnylands Collection.

Left A commemorative paperweight marks the celebration of Ronald Reagan's last New Year's Eve as President.
Sunnylands Collection.

to the gate. Everyone recognized that indeed things would never be the same now that President Reagan and his cabinet members were in attendance at a private citizen's home. Sunnylands was surrounded by a perimeter fence with roaming guards. It was, for all normal purposes, inaccessible. That said, the house's location is well known to the public. The 1981/1982 party continued without further incident. Later that evening, President Reagan brought the house down diffusing the tension when, during his pre-dinner toast, he indicated that there was a mysterious black purse unclaimed at his table and asked if anyone knew whose it was.

NEW YEAR'S		1980	
Mr. & Mrs. Deutsch.....20		SUNNYLANDS	President-elect and Mrs. Reagan.....7
Mr. & Mrs. Jorgensen.....4			Mr. & Mrs. Smith.....23
Mr. & Mrs. Price..328-1486			Mr. & Mrs. Wilson.....6

CALENDAR OF EVENTS	
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 30th	
LUNCH Game Room 1:00 pm	DINNER Kilorado Country Club Cocktails 7:45 pm Dinner 8:30 pm
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 31st	
Golf / Football / Tennis / Backgammon	
LUNCH Game Room 1:00 pm	DINNER Main House Cocktails 8:15 pm Dinner 9:00 pm
THURSDAY, JANUARY 1st	
Golf / Football / Tennis / Backgammon	
LUNCH Game Room 1:00 pm	DINNER Mr. & Mrs. Justin Dart's 75-860 Carmelien Lane Kilorado Country Club 7:30 pm
FRIDAY, JANUARY 2nd	
Golf / Football / Tennis / Backgammon	
LUNCH Game Room 12:30 pm	DINNER Main House Cocktails 7:30 pm Dinner 8:15 pm
SATURDAY, JANUARY 3rd	
Golf / Football / Tennis / Backgammon	
LUNCH Game Room 1:00 pm	DINNER Mr. & Mrs. Hal Wallis* 70-649 Halper Lake Road Tamarisk Country Club 7:00 pm

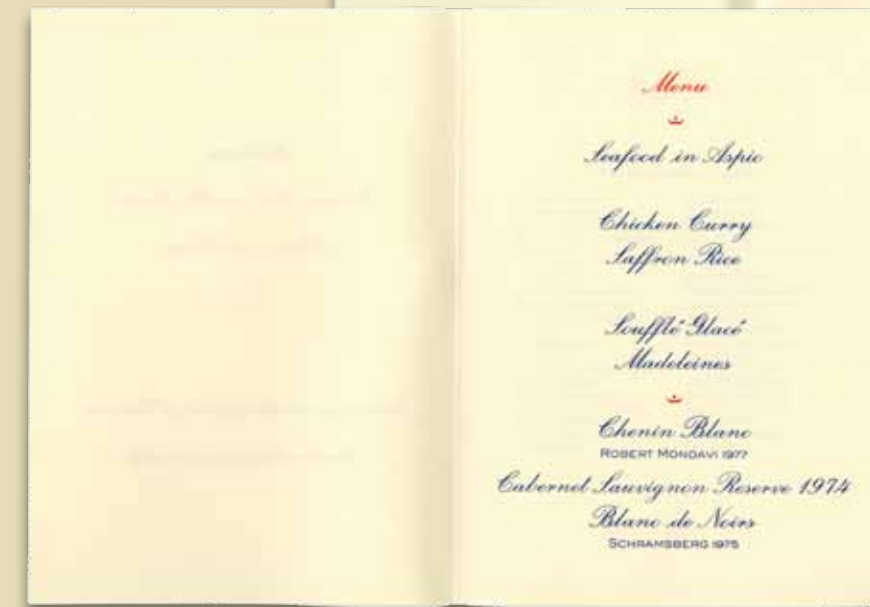
The election of close friend Ronald Reagan to the presidency further elevated Sunnylands as a significant historic site. The Reagans had always been regular visitors to Sunnylands, including attendance at a

handful of the earlier New Year's Eve parties, but their visits would no longer be quiet, under-the-radar getaways from the stresses of life and politics. Rather, motorcades, press announcements, road barricades, the landing of the presidential helicopter, *Marine One*, on the front lawn of Sunnylands, and sightings of the presidential airplane, *Air Force One* at the Palm Springs International Airport became attendant requirements for a visit from dear friends. The Annenbergs were well versed in history and enjoyed visiting historic sites. Their careful retention of records and loosening their ban on photography upon Reagan's ascendancy to the White House indicate that they understood the interesting provenance that Sunnylands was accruing.



Sunnylands operations staff produced a "Calendar of Events" worksheet when guests were in residence. This sheet was used throughout the social season, which ran from November to April each year. This one-sheet document provided a snapshot view of the list of house guests in attendance, and the available leisure and sports activities, excursions and off-campus events, and internal meals that were offered throughout the visit. For the particular series of events surrounding the 1980 New Year's Eve, a schedule was planned for the house guests in residence for the affair, including the Reagans, who always stayed in the Yellow Room in the guest wing. Guest suites are color-coded and include pink, peach, blue, green and yellow. The Reagans were joined by a few local friends who were in town for the New Year's Eve celebration. This inner-circle was treated to a five-day schedule of activities. Included were Armand and Harriet Deutsch; Earle and Marion Jorgensen; Charles and Carol Price; William and Jean French Smith, he the Attorney General-designate; and William and Betty Wilson.

On December 30, lunch was served in the Game Room at 1:00 pm. Cocktails that evening commenced



Opposite left A calendar documents the assorted leisure activities surrounding the 1980 New Year's Eve Party.

Sunnylands Collection.

Opposite right President Reagan holds a Sunnylands flag during a golf game. December 31, 1988.

Official White House photo.

Left Guest list and menu for the 1980 New Year's Eve Party.

Sunnylands Collection.

at the El Dorado Country Club prior to dinner at 8:30 pm. The following day, golf, football, tennis, and backgammon were listed as suggested amusements. Lunch was once again served in the Game Room at 1:00 pm followed by the big event at what they referred to as the “Main House” commencing with cocktails at 8:15 pm. The next day, New Year’s Day, a similar routine was capped off with an off-campus dinner co-hosted by Justin and Jane Dart at their home at the El Dorado Country Club. Dart, along with fellow guest Earle Jorgensen, had reportedly encouraged Reagan to run for governor then president.³⁴ On the final evening of January 3, dinner was hosted at 7:00 pm at the home of Hal Wallis on Halper Lake Road at the Tamarisk Country Club, just west of Sunnylands.

The program and menu for the New Year’s Eve party was tied with a red, white, and blue ribbon in a patriotic nod to the President-elect and soon-to-be First Lady, who were listed as, “Ronnie and Nancy,” to remind everyone that only some things had changed. The intimacy earned through a lifetime of friendship was not expendable. Halcyon Days enamel boxes with the Sunnylands emblem were presented as party favors for the women in attendance. Because of the number of attendees (sixty-two), high-end rental sets of table settings including china, flatware, and glassware, were used for the sit-down dinner. Cocktails and passed hors d’oeuvres were served in the living room followed by dinner in the atrium with five tables of ten and one table of twelve. As was customary, couples were split up during dinner with husbands and wives seated at different tables to encourage more wide-ranging conversation and networking with new friends. Guests were seated in an alternating male-female pattern. Dancing to live music performed by Tony Rose and his orchestra commenced with dessert and lasted long into the night. At midnight, the countdown was announced and “Auld Lang Syne” wafted across the room.

That particular night, a seafood first course, seafood in aspic, was served with a 1977 Mondavi Chenin Blanc followed by chicken curry with saffron rice. This main course was paired with Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve 1974. A soufflé glacé and madeline cookies were paired with a 1975 Schramsberg blanc de noirs for dessert.

In more ways than one, the 1980 New Year’s Eve extravaganza cemented the party as a new annual “must” on the national social scene. In subsequent years a new layer of security was added to the gate protocol. Michael Comerford recalls the system:

“The Secret Service sat down with the estate manager and Sunnylands security staff and worked out a system. Each confirmed guest was sent a randomly-generated, number-coded pass after it was firmly established that they would be attending the New Year’s Eve party. As guests arrived at the gate, the numbered passes were cross-referenced with the secret numbers on file by a member of the president’s security team before the guest was allowed to enter the property. After this system was implemented we had no more impostors.”³⁵

The Reagans and primary members of their cabinet attended each subsequent year throughout both terms of the presidency. The power brokers and the jet set accelerated in their attendance over the years with the addition of Secretary of Defense, Caspar and Jane Weinberger; Secretary of the Treasury, Donald and Anne Buchanan Regan; Secretary of State, Alexander and Patricia Haig; Secretary of State, George P. and Helena Shultz; Holmes and Virginia Harris Tuttle, he an automobile industry leader and the unofficial head of President Reagan’s “kitchen cabinet”; Simon and Virginia Ramo, he the founder and president of TRW corporation; Malcolm Forbes, publisher; Frank and Barbara Sinatra; Kirk and Anne Douglas; Brooke Astor; Dinah Shore; and actor Freeman Gosden (who had been to Sunnylands on a previous occasion when he served as the best man in Frank Sinatra’s wedding).

At the 1975 New Year’s Eve party, Ronald Reagan signed the guest book at Sunnylands: “Have Tux will travel.” Nancy signed below Ronald, “Home again! Heaven! ☺”

On January 2, 1981, following the fantastic New Year’s celebration weekend, President-elect Reagan, due to be sworn in to the presidency eighteen days later, again signed the Sunnylands guest book: “Why as we leave do I feel I’m playing *Paradise Lost*?” To which Nancy added, “I can’t say it any better than that xx.”



Left
New Year’s Eve 1980.
Harriet Deustch,
Lee Annenberg,
Carol Price,
Jean French-Smith,
Betty Wilson,
Josephine Louis,
Marion Jorgenson.

Sunnylands Collection.

Below left
New Year’s Eve 1980.
Walter Annenberg,
Gloria Stewart,
Dolores Hope,
Jimmy Stewart,
Bob Hope.

Sunnylands Collection.

Below The enamel box
presented as a
party favor.

Sunnylands Collection.





LUNCH IS SERVED, YOUR MAJESTY

THE PLEASURE OF YOUR COMPANY: ENTERTAINING AT SUNNYLANDS

The Annenbergs welcome Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip to Sunnylands. February 27, 1983.

Sunnylands Collection.

It is not unusual to invite friends over to visit, unless they're the Queen of England and the Duke of Edinburgh. In September 1982, the Annenbergs learned of an impending royal visit by the Queen and Prince Philip to the United States, which would include a trip to California. Walter wrote to the Private Secretary to the Queen, the Right Honorable Sir Philip Moore, Buckingham Palace:

DATE	NAME	RESIDENCE
	Elizabeth II	
	Philip	
	February 27 th 1983	

“Dear Sir Philip:

It has been gratifying to learn that Her Majesty and Prince Philip will be visiting California in the latter part of February and early March next year. In the light of this distinguished visit, Lee and I would be most happy to offer hospitality at our winter residence, 'Sunnylands' in Rancho Mirage, California....Of course we recognize that there is a great deal to see in the State of California and there will be extensive invitations by communities, as well as individuals, but Lee and I wanted to make sure that should a desert visit to a rather unusual modern home, in what is a 250 acre oasis, might be of interest for the agenda on the trip, we would be honored to entertain Her Majesty's party. The Prince of Wales was a guest of ours when he was on a Naval cruise and I believe the year was

1974. I mention this because Her Majesty may want to query Prince Charles about 'Sunnylands.' We have ample guest facilities and we would indeed be pleased to provide any hospitality that would be agreeable.

Sincerely,

Walter Annenberg.³⁶ ”

A luncheon at Sunnylands was scheduled for Sunday, February 27, 1983, a perfect respite from a very vigorous touring agenda. The official west coast visit of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and His Royal Highness the Prince Philip Duke of Edinburgh occurred from February 26 to March 7. Utilizing the royal yacht *HMV Britannia* as their base of operations, the tour traversed the west coast with stops in Seattle, Yosemite, San Francisco, Stanford University in Palo Alto, Sacramento, Santa Barbara, Palm Springs, Los Angeles, and San Diego.

The royal party flew to Palm Springs from San Diego on *Air Force Two*, President Reagan's backup plane, and drove in a small motorcade to the estate.³⁷

The official schedule at Sunnylands was written as follows:

- 12:05 Arrival
- 12:50 Announce Lunch
- 1:00 Sit Down to Lunch
- 2:15 Coffee in Drawing Room
- 2:45 Tour Game Room and Golf Course
- 3:30 Return to Refresh and Sign Guest Book

Eighteen guests were included in this privileged opportunity to dine informally (relatively speaking) with the Queen of England in a private American home. There were eight members of the royal party and ten Americans. The English constituency included the Queen and Prince Philip; Mistress of the Robes, the Duchess of Grafton; Lady-in-Waiting, Lady Susan Hussey; Secretary to the Queen, The Right Honorable Sir Philip Moore; Assistant Private Secretary, Robert Fellowes; Press Secretary to the Queen, Michael Shea; the British ambassador to the United States, Sir Oliver Wright and Lady Wright; and the Consul General, Los Angeles, George F. Finlayson and his wife.



Opposite A page from the Sunnylands Guestbook.
Sunnylands Collection.

Left Queen Elizabeth and Walter Annenberg in the Room of Memories.
Sunnylands Collection.

The American contingency included the Annenbergs; former President Gerald Ford and former First Lady Betty Ford; deputy chief of staff and assistant to the president, Michael Deaver and his wife Carolyn; United States ambassador to the Court of Saint James's, John J. Louis and his wife Josephine; and chief of protocol, Selwa Roosevelt.

The guest list reflects strict adherence to and deep understanding of protocol. However tempting, this was not an appropriate occasion to include one's friends. As Walter said in the press at the time, "If we asked four old friends, we'd make enemies of 40. We thought it prudent to just have the official party."³⁸



Although the President and Nancy Reagan might have seemed logical guests for this occasion given their political status, their relationship with the Annenbergs, and their frequent visits to Sunnylands, the Reagans were on the guest lists of several other events occurring over the following days including a Hollywood party to occur at 20th-Century Fox studios, a luncheon at the Reagan ranch near Santa Barbara, and a dinner aboard the royal yacht *Britannia*.³⁹


The seating chart reflected the Annenberg preference for small, round tables encouraging conversation. Ruth Seltzer, society columnist for *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, interviewed the Annenbergs at Sunnylands three days before the luncheon and then subsequently wrote about the details:

“At yesterday's luncheon, guests were seated at two oval rosewood ivory-inlaid dining tables. Queen Elizabeth sat between Walter Annenberg and Gerald Ford...Prince Philip was seated between Lee Annenberg and Betty Ford. Gerald Ford was President when the queen and the prince visited the United States during the nation's Bicentennial. The Fords have a home in Rancho Mirage, a short distance from Sunnylands.”⁴⁰

Reflecting an international flavor and the talents of French chef Michel Venuat, the luncheon began with a fish course served with a 1979 Riesling wine from Germany. The main course was a rack of lamb (a specialty of Michel's), served with string beans, glazed carrots, and potatoes. This was paired with a 1966 Chateau Lafite Rothschild, a French cabernet blend. A *soufflé a l'erable* (with maple) was served for dessert paired with 1970 Dom Perignon champagne.

The table was set with Royal Copenhagen's Flora Danica china and pale green placemats shaped like cabbage roses. The flatware chosen was Georg Jensen's cactus pattern and a variety of fine Baccarat crystal glassware adorned the table. No flowers were used on the tables. Leonore, attending to every nuance of hospitality, created lovely centerpieces featuring Boehm porcelain flowers and Flora Danica tureens in a nod to this very fine china that was also used in the English royal household. The Queen famously quipped following the luncheon that she and the Annenbergs had the same china, only the Annenbergs had more of it.⁴¹ Typically, the extraordinary collection of fine English silver-gilt objects at Sunnylands would have been on display in the dining room for such a prestigious occasion. The collection was assembled with great enthusiasm by the Annenbergs over a lifetime. The impressive royal provenance of some of their finer selections was part of the allure of this rare silver work. A number of baskets in the collection once belonged to the Queen's great-great-great-grandmother, Queen Charlotte and her husband, King George III. These pieces slipped through royal hands and entered the open marketplace through political episodes which might still provoke sensitivity. To remain firmly on the cautious side of polite society, the silver-gilt was not on

LUNCHEON SEATING PLAN
February 27, 1983



HRH The Duke of Edinburgh

Mrs. Ford Mrs. Annenberg

Sir Philip Moore His Excellency The British Ambassador

Ambassador Roosevelt Mrs. Deaver

Mr. Fellowes


Mr. Shea Mrs. Louis Mr. Finlayson

Mrs. Finlayson Lady Susan Hussey

Ambassador Louis Mr. Deaver

The Duchess of Grafton Lady Wright

President Ford Her Majesty The Queen Ambassador Annenberg



Mousselines of Salmon
Cucumbers Sauce Verte

Rack of Lamb

String Beans Glazed Carrots
Pommes Parisienne

Souffle à l'Erable

~

Bernkasteler Doctor Riesling
1979 Auslese

Chateau Lafite Rothschild 1966
Dom Perignon 1970

~

February 27, 1983



Opposite The dining room in preparation for the Queen's lunch.
Sunnylands Collection.

Left Ephemera from the Queen's lunch.
Sunnylands Collection.

Below A Boehm porcelain Leonore Annenberg rose.
Sunnylands Collection.

LUNCH IS SERVED. YOUR MAJESTY

display for the Queen's luncheon.⁴²

Following lunch, the party exited the dining room and proceeded to the Game Room for a quick glance at this unique, less formal space used for casual entertaining before touring the impressive grounds in golf carts. Unfortunately, the sunny and warm winter weather for which the Sonoran Desert is known was not in evidence that afternoon. Walter wrote to the Queen on March 10, 1983:



“Your Majesty,

When I contemplate your historic visit to California my thoughts turn to the conduct of the elements that displayed their power during your ten-day stay. Thunder, lightning, torrential rains, unrelenting gales, rock slides, mud slides, and mountainous waves, all conspiring to show their teeth; hardly an export from Britain and yet accepted with equanimity reflecting regal sportsmanship. Sunnylands, my wife and I will not forget your graciousness in visiting us and your hospitality aboard the Britannia. Robert Fellowes diligently sent us the autographed pictures which now grace our drawing room and for which we thank you and Prince Philip.

Ever respectfully,

*Walter Annenberg.*⁴³”

In order to fully appreciate the story of the Queen's visit to Sunnylands, one must understand the honor of such an event. The Queen rarely visits a foreign private citizen's home, without diplomatic or official business on the agenda. The Annenbergs met the exception to this rule of protocol because of their close ties to the royal family.

Relationships with members of the British royal family became a very important part of the Annenbergs's personal life during and following their years living in England. While Walter served as ambassador to the Court of Saint James's from 1969 to 1974, the couple came to know many royal family members and friendships evolved. New friends made in England undoubtedly heard tales of the Annenbergs's extraordinary and notable private American home, Sunnylands, and these stories inspired many royal visitors to see it for themselves. The Sunnylands guest book, which all guests were gently cajoled to sign regardless of their status, indicates that other royal family members visited as well. Princess Margaret visited on at least two occasions; Charles, Prince of Wales visited twice; Prince Andrew and Sarah Ferguson, Duke and Duchess of York, visited three times; Prince Edward and Sophie, Duke and Countess of Essex, visited once; and Princess Alexandra and Sir Angus Ogilvy of Kent visited once.

President Richard Nixon was responsible for introducing the Annenbergs to the extraordinary experiences surrounding royal pageantry and ambassadorial protocol. President Nixon was a frequent visitor to Sunnylands, signing the guest book thirteen times between 1969 and 1979. During a visit at Sunnylands, he asked Walter Annenberg, a trusted friend, to serve as ambassador to the Court of St. James's. This invitation provided the Annenbergs with what they considered to be some of the most important years of their lives. In a letter to Queen Elizabeth II written March 30, 1988, Walter shared the following sentiment: “As a former Ambassador to the United Kingdom my wife and I had our happiest years there and our respect for the Monarchy is boundless.”⁴⁴

Walter Annenberg's service in England was a triumph. On a personal level, the years of service resulted in lifetime friendships with not only royal family members

Opposite Queen Elizabeth and Walter Annenberg tour Sunnylands on a golf cart, despite the inclement weather.

Sunnylands Collection.

Below The Annenbergs, Queen Elizabeth, and Prince Philip pose for a photograph at the entrance to the house.

Sunnylands Collection.



but also such important political figures as Prime Ministers Margaret Thatcher and John Major, both of whom subsequently visited Sunnylands. They also extended their lifetime of philanthropic generosity to their temporary homeland, becoming respected and leading philanthropists on the international stage. In particular, British institutions of higher learning and cultural arts benefited from their residency. Their philanthropic generosity in the United Kingdom exceeded \$20 million.⁴⁵ The first of these gifts was a \$1 million renovation of Winfield House, the ambassadorial residence located in Regent's Park in London. Other examples included a \$1 million gift to Oxford University; \$5 million to the American Friends of the National Gallery of England; \$1 million to the American Fund for the Tate Gallery; \$1 million to the American Friends of Covent Garden (Royal Opera House); and \$9.6 million to the British Museum.



The importance of the friendships established during the years spent in England is reflected in the décor at Sunnylands. The former dining room was renamed the Royal Sitting Room when it was repurposed in 1974 as a formal sitting room. An impressive collection of signed photographs of the British aristocracy and royal family take center stage in that space. In the Room of Memories, the royal family has pride of place

with an entire hallway dedicated to the chronological installation of the Queen Mother's annual Christmas cards dating from 1972 to 2001. Walter referred to this hallway installation as his Royal Gallery.⁴⁶ Also installed in the room are royal wedding invitations, photos of the Queen and Prince Philip's luncheon visit, and framed correspondence.

Physical evidence of the ties that formed between these friends abounds in the Sunnylands archive. There are over 500 individual letters between the Annenbergs and the royal family.⁴⁷ In addition, there are many invitations, cards, photos, telegrams, and other ephemera reflecting a lifetime of continuous communication. In other words, the families stayed in touch over the years. As an example of their communications, in May 1992, Walter wrote the following letter to the Queen:

“Your Majesty,

I had the good fortune to see the Page One cutting of you, your mother and Prince William from the April 20th edition of the TIMES which was totally heartwarming. At the earliest convenience, I am going to try to get a photographic copy of this so as to place it in my Room of Memories at Sunnylands, in Rancho Mirage, California. The expression of Prince William is touching, but I am not surprised because when I met him when I was having tea with the Prince of Wales in Kensington Gardens, I found him to have a remarkable personality for a youngster; he was about three or four years of age at the time. I did tell the Prince of Wales that I would like to be around when Prince William was about 21 years old because the lad certainly had something in his make-up. Incidentally, as I was leaving the residence, William got in my car. When Prince Charles asked him to get out, he said, 'I want to go with this man, I like him.' Whereupon, the Prince had to use a bit of force to get him out of the car.

Respectfully,

Walter Annenberg.⁴⁸ ”



Opposite The Royal Sitting Room at Sunnylands.

Photo by Graydon Wood, 2006.

Left Correspondence between Walter Annenberg and the royal family.

Sunnylands Collection.

Seven months later on December 2, 1992, he again wrote to the Queen:

“Your Majesty,

My wife and I were shocked and saddened to see Windsor Castle in flames. It seemed incredible that this historic home that has meant so much to so many was threatened with destruction. Fortunately, the fire was contained and important private rooms and treasures saved. We had just watched the superb film made to honor your forty years on the Throne which brought back many, many wonderful memories of our five-and-a-half years in England. We recalled the magnificent State dinners we attended and the very special overnight stay at Windsor. Do accept our great admiration and respect for the quality of your leadership as Queen.

Faithfully,

Walter Annenberg.⁴⁹ ”

To which the Queen responded, on February 22, 1993:

“Dear Mr. Annenberg,

First of all, may I thank you and Mrs. Annenberg very belatedly for your most kind letter about the awful fire at Windsor in November. It was very nice to hear of your memories of the castle and fortunately the bit that was harmed was being re-wired so had no furniture or pictures in it. Andrew, I'm sure has told you all about it as he was there and much more involved than I was—who could only come rushing from London and wander about miserably while the fire raged! It was very nice that Andrew came and stayed with you recently—thank you for having him and guiding him in the right direction as well! It is sad that all my family seem to have had such difficulties in marriages—Phillip and I have discovered that the next generation are very different!

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth R.⁵⁰ ”

By all accounts the lunch was well received by the Queen, Prince, and members of their touring party. Letters streamed in to Sunnylands thanking the Annenbergs for a lovely few hours in their very special home. The Queen and Prince Philip had at last enjoyed a visit to the fabled Sunnylands as had their son, Charles, nine years earlier. Walter wrote to the Assistant Private Secretary to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Robert Fellowes who had also attended the lunch, in reply to a thank-you Mr. Fellowes had sent to the Annenbergs:

“The superb pictures signed by Her Majesty and The Duke of Edinburgh accompanying your good letter of March 3rd is indeed appreciated. The pictures will be framed and become part of Sunnylands history; in addition, in the days ahead we will be able to proudly show these photographs to visitors. While I doubt that I shall live to have another such visitation as I did on February 27th, no greater compliment was ever paid my wife and me than a visit by Her Majesty and His Royal Highness. May I also add that it was a joy for us to have you and those who serve with you in the Royal household.

With all good wishes.

Sincerely,

Walter Annenberg.⁵¹ ”

The friendship between the Annenbergs and the British royal family continued throughout the years. Although Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Phillip have not visited Sunnylands again, all three of their sons (Charles, Andrew, and Edward) as well as her sister Margaret visited Sunnylands in the years that followed the luncheon. The Annenbergs visited with the royal family abroad:

“Throughout the 1990s, Walter made a special trip to London annually to host a birthday luncheon at Claridges for the Queen Mother and forty of her friends. To his delight, in 1995, the queen attended to mark her mother's ninety-fifth birthday.⁵² ”



Left Queen Elizabeth and Leonore Annenberg in the living room at Sunnylands.

Sunnylands Collection.

Below left The Queen's motorcade leaves the Palm Springs airport, en route to Sunnylands.

Sunnylands Collection.

Below right The Queen and Prince Philip enter the gates of Sunnylands with security close behind.

Sunnylands Collection.





SUMMIT IN THE SUN

50 THE PLEASURE OF YOUR COMPANY: ENTERTAINING AT SUNNYLANDS

President Bush and Prime Minister Kaifu
in the Royal Sitting Room,
March 2, 1990.
Photo courtesy of Toshiki Kaifu.

The fourth event celebrated in the exhibition occurred during the time period following Walter Annenberg's retirement. In 1988 he sold Triangle Publications, Inc. to Rupert Murdoch for \$3.2 billion. The company held assets including *TV Guide*, *Seventeen*, and the *Daily Racing Form*. The Annenbergs now focused their attention on changing lives through focused philanthropic efforts and ensuring that their legacy of giving would continue beyond their lifetimes. The Annenberg Foundation was formed in 1989 with \$1.2 billion in assets to advance the public good. In its early years, the foundation made significant donations that set a new standard for philanthropy. For instance, in March 1990, the foundation awarded a \$50 million gift to the United Negro College Fund, the largest amount ever contributed to the organization; and, in 1993, the Annenberg Foundation announced the \$500 million matching funds program to benefit K-12 public education. Walter vehemently believed in the power of



education to transform lives and understood that there were attendant responsibilities to others associated with the opportunities that he had enjoyed throughout his life. Though the Annenbergs were philanthropists throughout their lives, it was to education, the arts, and other social issues that they focused more of their targeted attention during this time. In 1990, Walter said, "If you've had good fortune in life, I think you have a responsibility to other people. That's fundamental to citizenship."⁵³

In retirement, the Annenbergs continued to actively engage in diplomatic roles as a natural extension of the civic-focused lives they had led, coupled with their many friendships with American and world leaders. In early February 1990, President George H. W. Bush and First Lady Barbara Bush made plans to visit the Annenbergs at Sunnylands over the weekend of March 2. Leonore wrote:

*"Mr. President,
Knowing how much you love to play tennis and golf, would you like us to set up a tennis and golf game for you? Barbara, if there is anything that you would especially like to do that weekend, please let me know.
With affection,
Lee."⁵⁴*

President Bush clearly had his impending trip to Sunnylands on his mind when he spoke on the telephone from the Oval Office on February 23, 1990. Toshiki Kaifu had been serving as Prime Minister of Japan for six months. Three days prior to President Bush's call, on February 20, Prime Minister Kaifu's party reelected him for an additional eighteen-month term. President Bush called to congratulate him on his recent victory and used the opportunity to propose a meeting. President Bush said:

"...I was also calling to see whether, with your victory behind you, it would fit with your schedule for us to have a personal conversation. Depending on your schedule, I suggest we meet in California on March 4th for golf in Palm Springs followed by meetings on March 5. This is just a suggestion. If that does not work we will work on another place or another time...I want you to know that I have no hidden agenda or special message for you. After your magnificent election victory, I wanted to get together to talk. The U.S.-Japan relationship is vital to both countries and that is what this meeting is all about. The meeting is designed to signal my personal interest in this relationship. I want to meet with someone I consider a friend on a very personal basis."⁵⁵

Opposite Walter Annenberg shakes hands with Christopher Edley, president of the UNCF, after announcing a \$50 million gift. March 4, 1990.

Official White House photo.

Below President Bush, Walter Annenberg, and Prime Minister Kaifu in the Room of Memories. March 2, 1990.

Photograph courtesy of Toshiki Kaifu.



In the conversation, Kaifu said he would consider the invitation and evidently later agreed to the meeting. This was the second time the two leaders would meet; the first was six months earlier in Washington, D.C. shortly after Kaifu took office.⁵⁶ Several components to the visit evolved: the Bushes were to stay at Sunnylands as had been previously planned; Kaifu was to stay at the Wyndham Palm Springs. There were to be summit meetings during the day on Friday and Saturday at The Club at Morningside, less than a mile from Sunnylands, and a formal dinner was to be held at Sunnylands, hosted by the president and first lady on Friday night, March 2.



State and official dinners are distinct diplomatic events specifically orchestrated to build and/or strengthen a working relationship with a foreign nation. The difference between the two types of dinners is that state dinners are reserved for the head of state rather than the head of government. Prime Minister Kaifu was the head of government at the time of the Bush invitation to Sunnylands. Japanese prime ministers are first elected and then officially appointed to their position by the reigning emperor, the head of state. Therefore, the Bush-Kaifu dinner at Sunnylands was an official dinner rather than a state dinner.

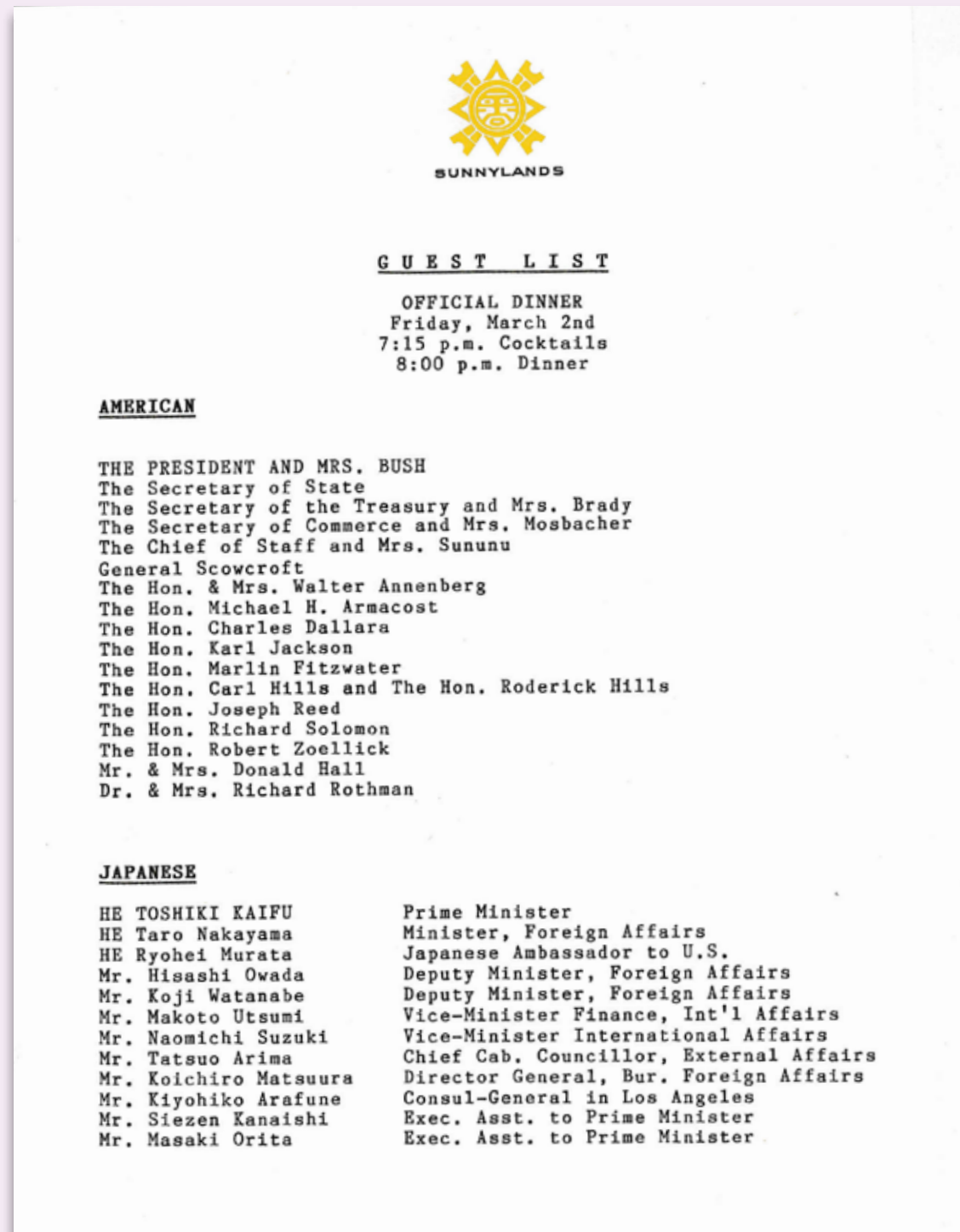
Similarly, a formal dinner for the prime minister of the United Kingdom, also a head of government, would be considered an official dinner while a dinner for the Queen of the United Kingdom would be considered a state dinner. That said, President Barack Obama recently broke from this protocol when he mixed both terminologies. He and First Lady Michelle Obama officially hosted the prime minister of the United Kingdom, David Cameron, and his wife Samantha, at the White House for a formal dinner. The agenda for the visit listed it as an official visit during which they would be honored with a state dinner. Peter Westmacott, Britain's new ambassador to the United States, told the *Washington Post* that the "White House is dispensing with the awkward-but-technically-correct 'official dinner' nomenclature."⁵⁷ The guest list produced for the Bush-Kaifu dinner clearly states that the dinner was an official dinner rather than a state dinner.

Semantics aside, both types of dinners are never considered opportunities for fundraising or patronage, but, rather, are diplomatic events. All protocols for these dinners, including guest lists, menus, entertainment, etc., reflect an awareness of, and sensitivity to, the cultural norms of the visiting nation. There was a precedent for state and official dinners to be held outside the White House though very few have occurred at a private citizen's home. The notion of hosting a state dinner in a setting other than the White House is credited to former First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy when she and President John F. Kennedy hosted a state dinner at Mount Vernon in July 1961 for President Ayub Khan of Pakistan. This was the first ever held outside the White House.⁵⁸

“ In a historic break with tradition, Mrs. Kennedy chose to stage the event, held July 11, 1961, for the president of Pakistan, under a tent at Mount Vernon, 16 miles from the White House. Her inspiration was a trip the Kennedys had taken to France, where President Charles de Gaulle had hosted a dinner in their honor at Versailles.”⁵⁹

The guest list for the Bush-Kaifu dinner at Sunnylands reflects the diplomatic focus of the dinner. The Japanese delegation included twelve guests, all with official titles. Non-political friends of the

Opposite and left Signed menu, place card, and guest list from the official dinner. March 2, 1990. Sunnylands Collection.



Annenbergs were largely absent from the attendee list. Journalist and author Sally Quinn said it best:

“When putting together a guest list for the approval of the President and First Lady you had to be sure to invite people who should be invited, soothe those who are not invited but think they should be invited, and don’t invite people who should not be invited.”⁶⁰

Guests			
Date	Name	Residence	Phone Number / App
	海部俊樹	日本国 内閣総理大臣	Kaifu
	中山太郎	日本国 外務大臣	Foreign Minister
	村田健児	Embassies of Japan in the United States	
	- plus 7 other members of the Japanese Delegation		
March 203, 1990	Asa Bush	with the lastings + thanks!	
	Bilbaso Busp	220, Tow	
	Harold R. Ford	As always - Wonderful	
	Ditty Ford	- W's Fabulous!	
	Wick Macky	A wonderful visit - as always!	
	Kitty Bradley	T + i Paradise	
	Lucine Westone		
	John Hummer & Rosemary! Wonderful hosts! Great hospitality!		
	Caroline + Leonard Firestone	Raynor King	
	Adele and Donald Hall	Green Mt. Missouri - (Springer!)	

Only two civilian couples were present on the American guest list: Donald and Adele Hall and Richard and Marsha Rothman. Donald Hall was the founder of the Hall Family Foundation (Hallmark Cards) which was, and remains, one of the largest philanthropic foundations in the United States. Their philanthropic work inspired President Bush to name Donald Hall as chairman of the President’s Committee on the Arts and Humanities. Yet it was his wife’s activities that aligned with that particularly busy weekend at Sunnylands. Adele Hall was a civic leader who sat on many boards including the United Negro College Fund (UNCF). Their presence is explained by the fact that President Bush’s visit to the desert that weekend included multitasking. On the Sunday following the Friday official dinner, President Bush announced in a press conference

format on the grounds of Sunnylands a \$50 million gift from the Annenbergs to the UNCF—an unprecedented amount for that organization. President Bush wrote to the Annenbergs on February 6 as plans took shape for a getaway weekend at Sunnylands, prior to the scheduling of the Kaifu meetings, and made specific recommendations about guests for that particular weekend:

“Walter, the Will Farishes cannot come to Sunnylands. They have an unalterable conflict in Florida. The Bradys are delighted to accept your invitation. To replace the Farishes, although this is not at all necessary, might I suggest Don and Adele Hall of Kansas City. Don is (was) Chairman of Hallmark, his family’s company. He loves golf. Adele, his charming wife was mentioned in Chris Edley’s letter to you about those who have helped UNCF [United Negro College Fund] the most. This is just a suggestion and perhaps a little forward of me, but I know you’d love them both. Please be frank. Our love to Lee.

Warm Regards,

George.⁶¹

The other non-official couple in attendance was the Rothmans. Dr. Richard Rothman was Walter’s personal orthopedic surgeon and friend. In fact, the Rothmans were married at Inwood, the Annenbergs’s Pennsylvania estate. In 1977, Walter underwent hip replacement at Philadelphia’s Pennsylvania Hospital. Walter was so delighted with the outcome of the surgery that he gave the institution \$2 million to establish a hip replacement institute named after Rothman. The Bush visit to Sunnylands began as a social weekend of golf and swimming for friends and later evolved into an international summit. Fortuitously for the Rothmans, they had already been invited as guests for that particular weekend. Leonore wrote to the president on February 9, 2009, prior to the introduction of the Japanese prime minister’s visit: “I thought you should know that our only other house guests will be Walter’s orthopedic surgeon, Richard Rothman and his wife Marsha, whom we had already invited.”⁶²

Opposite Page from the Sunnylands guestbook. Sunnylands Collection.

Below Walter Annenberg is introduced to Prime Minister Kaifu. March 2, 1990. Official White House photo.



Seating charts for the evening reflect the Annenberg attention to detail and formal Washington protocols with each of the four tables having an American official acting as “head of table”. President George Bush, First Lady Barbara Bush, Secretary of State James A. Baker III, and Secretary of the Treasury James Brady each headed a table. Leonore was seated next to the president, and Walter was seated next to Barbara Bush. A balance of Japanese and American delegates made up the remainder of the guests. Four tables of nine (with the exception of the president’s table which held ten) reflected the Annenberg preference for small, round tables to facilitate conversation. Hence, the assigning of a “head of table” was a reference to protocol rather than a physical location. Thomas Jefferson is credited with having introduced the round dining table to the White House to specifically do away with hierarchy, encourage conviviality, and discourage a feeling of inequality.⁶³ The Annenbergs subscribed to this Jeffersonian approach to dining. White tablecloths and low, white floral centerpieces were chosen for the tables. Their collection of Royal Copenhagen Flora Danica pattern china was used as well as Baccarat crystal stemware and Georg Jensen cactus pattern flatware.

The menu for the evening reflected a decidedly international perspective with a pervasive French sensibility. This was probably due to the Annenberg chef, Michel Venuat, who was celebrated for his exquisite and masterful French creations. The Annenbergs appear to have wanted their Japanese guests to feast on the finest, and very difficult to execute, French cuisine. The first course might have recognized the traditional Japanese diet consisting largely of fish and vegetables, through the choice of *mousseline*; however, the dish is decidedly a French interpretation. British epicurean culture was represented in the choice of Beef Wellington. French cuisine was again referenced in the dessert choice of a soufflé (a specialty of the chef and family favorite) and in the use of the French language to describe the green beans, *haricot verts*. California wines were served exclusively. Walter suggested that this use of California wines reflected an effort to control costs and reduce the impact on taxpayers. He reportedly tried to

keep costs within reason because he said the State Department insisted that he be reimbursed for the cost of the dinner, given its high-level government diners.⁶⁴

According to the official White House itinerary for that weekend, the dinner progressed as follows: Prime Minister Kaifu and the Japanese delegation were greeted at the front door of Sunnylands at 7:30 pm by the President and First Lady as well as the Annenbergs. The group then proceeded directly to the dining room, which was closed to the press. Informal toasts began the meal which concluded at 9:30 pm. A Sunnylands-generated agenda reflected a cocktail period in the living room prior to dinner. From Michael Comerford’s vantage point of attending to every detail and ensuring perfect service, he believes the only challenge that evening was maneuvering around translators whose chairs were positioned slightly behind the guests they were assisting.

At the local level, in recognition of the significance of hosting an official dinner at a private home, Sunnylands was declared an historic site by the City of Rancho Mirage:

“The City of Rancho Mirage Hereby Declares Sunnylands An Historic Site in recognition of The Official Dinner given by The President of the United States George Bush in honor of The Prime Minister of Japan Toshiki Kaifu in this residence March 2, 1990. Presented to The Honorable and Mrs. Walter H. Annenberg, Sunnylands, Rancho Mirage, California.”

The meeting between President Bush and Prime Minister Kaifu was reportedly the first United States-Japan summit on the west coast since 1947.⁶⁵ The summit came to a close when Kaifu left the desert late Saturday afternoon. The press dubbed the weekend “Summit in the Sun.”⁶⁶ While no tangible policy changes were reached over the busy weekend, the tone in the press was that a relationship between President Bush and Prime Minister Kaifu had been initiated in ideal conditions paving the way for more serious discussions in the future. “There is no magic word that will erase the \$49 billion trade surplus,” Kaifu said ahead of the meeting.⁶⁷ No details of new policies or initiatives were mentioned ahead of the meeting, but officials in both

7:20 pm THE PRESIDENT and Mrs. Bush arrive Annenberg Residence.
Met by:
The Honorable and Mrs. Walter Annenberg (Lenore)

7:30 pm THE PRESIDENT and Mrs. Bush, accompanied by Ambassador and Mrs. Annenberg, proceed to Front Door to receive Prime Minister Kaifu and the Japanese Delegation.

7:33 pm THE PRESIDENT and Mrs. Bush conclude Greetings of Japanese Delegation and, accompanied by Prime Minister Kaifu and Ambassador and Mrs. Annenberg, proceed to Dining Room.

EVENT: DINNER HOSTED BY PRESIDENT AND MRS. BUSH
CLOSED PRESS
INFORMAL TOASTS

7:35 pm THE PRESIDENT and Mrs. Bush, accompanied by Prime Minister Kaifu and Ambassador and Mrs. Annenberg, arrive Dining Room and begin participation in Dinner.

9:30 pm THE PRESIDENT and Mrs. Bush conclude participation in Dinner, depart Dining Room, and bid Farewell to Prime Minister Kaifu and Japanese Delegation.

9:35 pm THE PRESIDENT and Mrs. Bush depart Annenberg Residence and proceed to Guest House.

9:40 pm THE PRESIDENT and Mrs. Bush arrive Guest House for RON.

Page Nine

Left White House staff prepared an exacting schedule for the event.

Sunnylands Collection.

Below Table settings for the official dinner. March 2, 1990.

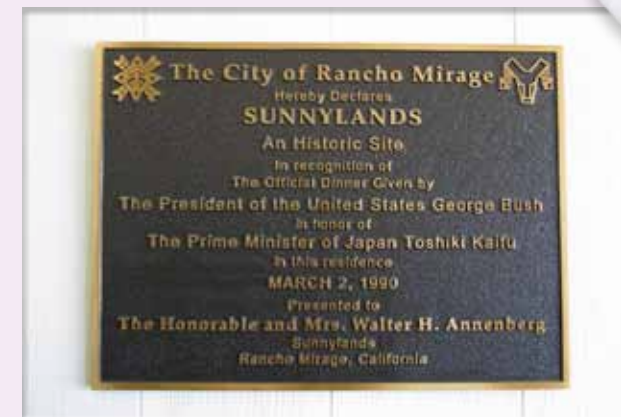
Official White House photo.

Below left The commemorative plaque issued by the City of Rancho Mirage.

Sunnylands Collection.

Below right Napkin from the linen collection used at the official dinner.

Sunnylands Collection.



countries spoke of the need to develop cooperation despite the problems existing between the two then-largest capitalist economies in the world.⁶⁸

In a telephone conversation recorded from the Oval Office one month following the dinner, Kaifu said:

“Our meetings at Palm Springs were extremely useful. Upon my return to Japan I sought to respond to you, George, and your expression of your concern. I have done my utmost to resolve the trade problems. With respect to individual trade problems, I have gotten the cooperation of the party leaders and the bureaucracy on supercomputers, telecommunication, satellites, and we are moving in the right direction on forest products. On telecommunications, I have made decisions necessary to put this behind us...”

To which the president responded:

“Well, first of all, I greatly appreciate all the effort you and your colleagues have been making to follow up the Palm Springs meeting...”⁶⁹

Thank-you notes poured in following the dinner. President Bush wrote a note from the White House dated six days following the historic evening, “Happiness is a visit with the Annenbergs at Sunnylands. With family love and many thanks, George Bush”. But it was James A. Baker III whose thank-you letter recalled the weekend in more detail:

“Dear Lee and Walter:

Thanks so very much for your warm and gracious hospitality last weekend. I know you were initially expecting to spend a more quiet couple of days with the President. Sunnylands was, of course, a perfect setting for the meetings with Prime Minister Kaifu. All of your visitors—American and Japanese alike—were deeply impressed not only by the beautiful surroundings, but also by the incredible attention to every detail of the arrangements. Those of us who've had the pleasure of being your guests in the past know that you are wonderful hosts—but your efforts with regard to the Prime Minister's visit were simply above and beyond... Again, many thanks.

Sincerely,

Jim.⁷⁰

A *Los Angeles Times* writer, Robert A. Jones, captured the mystique of Sunnylands as a then-mysterious, private vortex of political and social power when he made the following observations during the week of the Bush-Kaifu *Summit in the Sun*:

“...Catch the evening news and you will see yet one more President of the United States making his ritualized arrival at the gates. This time it will be the Bush motorcade gliding down the boulevard, car lights blinking, little American flags flying from the fenders. The limos will turn into the compound, the iron gates will open, and the procession will disappear inside. There is no other private residence in the world that performs this function. Before Bush, Reagan came twice a year, before Reagan there was Ford and before that there was Nixon. In between, it was Queen Elizabeth and Prince Charles, who tried to hit polo balls from a golf cart....On Saturday, the iron gates will reopen, out will come the limos, and the Annenberg estate will settle back into the quiet of the desert, its mystery intact. We have watched this scene re-enacted so often on television that the Annenberg estate has become part of the cultural background, almost invisible. Anchor people say ‘Annenberg estate’ the same way they say ‘Camp David.’... Of course, mere luxury does not explain why this particular piece of real estate has become a magnet for one President after another. There are many billionaires, and many estates. But there are not many contained universes. There are few places, no matter how expensive, that can provide such a shield from the rest of us, the air of mystery and seclusion, as these particular 205 acres... What we have here is a place, planted in the sands of Rancho Mirage, that has the power to infuse its guests with the trappings of royalty...A place where the normal rules don't apply.”⁷¹

THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

March 12, 1990

Dear Lee and Walter:

Thanks so very much for your warm and gracious hospitality last weekend. I know you were initially expecting to spend a more quiet couple of days with the President.

Sunnylands was, of course, a perfect setting for the meetings with Prime Minister Kaifu. All of your visitors -- American and Japanese alike -- were deeply impressed not only by the beautiful surroundings, but also by the incredible attention to every detail of the arrangements. Those of us who've had the pleasure of being your guests in the past know that you are wonderful hosts -- but your efforts with regard to the Prime Minister's visit were simply above and beyond.

Susan really missed being with us, and asked me to be sure to send her warm regards along with my own.

Again, many thanks.

Sincerely,



James A. Baker, III

The Honorable and Mrs. Walter H. Annenberg
Sunnylands
Post Office Box 98
Rancho Mirage, California 92270

Left and below
Correspondence relating
to the official dinner.

Sunnylands Collection.

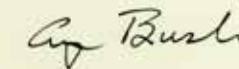
THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

March 8, 1990

Dear Lee, Dear Walter:

Happiness is
a visit with the Annenbergs
at "Sunnylands".

With family love
and many thanks.



THE SHIRT-SLEEVES SUMMIT

President Obama and
President Xi in the
atrium at Sunnylands.
June 7, 2013.
Official White House photo.

In 2002, Walter Annenberg died at the age of ninety-four and in 2009 Leonore Annenberg passed away at ninety-one years old. Prior to their passing, they had given a lot of thought to the future of Sunnylands. In 1976, Walter spoke to a Rancho Mirage publication about Sunnylands. He stated: "Ultimately, Sunnylands will be turned over to the public and I naturally take care in the selection of acquisitions for this long-range responsibility."⁷² Together Walter and Leonore created a document outlining their vision for the estate called the Declaration of Trust. They had witnessed the Sunnylands phenomenon whereby the privacy, comfort, and tranquility of the estate, further activated by the quiet, natural beauty of the desert and mountains beyond, diffused stress and reduced conflict. In turn, they saw that the gathering of disparate individuals in such a unique setting resulted in new relationships and consensus building. Their expressed desire was that this legacy be continued. Sunnylands transferred into a public trust in 2009 upon Leonore's death.



One of the specific mandates in the Declaration of Trust states that Sunnylands continue to serve in its historic role as a retreat for presidents of the United States. If there was any question whether the Trust could fulfill that aspiration beyond the Annenbergs's residency, it was answered with a phone call to Canny Kennard, the head of the Washington office for the Sunnylands retreat team.

In spring 2013, the White House contacted her indicating interest in an informal and symbolically important meeting between President Barack Obama and Chinese president Xi Jinping at Sunnylands. Furthermore, they requested that President Obama be allowed to stay past the meeting with the Chinese president for an additional, and all-too-rare, twenty-four hours of private recuperation time at Sunnylands. These two very different types of presidential activities were precisely what the Annenbergs hoped would occur at Sunnylands beyond their lives.

The Obama administration selected Sunnylands from among virtually every venue in the country as the location for this particular meeting, which would occur June 7–9. The retreat staff at Sunnylands, led by Geoffrey Cowan, had been working with the White House for over a year to make Sunnylands known as an historic resource at their disposal. The timing of the Obama administration's international diplomatic needs and the history of Sunnylands as a neutral venue used by world leaders was serendipitous and fortuitous for both Sunnylands and the White House. In the world of politics, symbolism is a major consideration in every action taken. The venue itself sent the precise signal the White House desired: that this meeting was less press spectacle, less pomp and circumstance, and anything but a traditional working meeting. Rather, this was to be a relatively informal meeting, followed by cocktails and dinner on the first evening, followed on day two with a private amble on the grounds for the two leaders, and ending with a mid-morning tea prior to the Chinese delegation's departure. President Obama specifically indicated a desire for a real opportunity for the two leaders to establish a personal connection ahead of potentially difficult future working meetings.



Opposite Aerial view of the estate. 2012.

Photograph by Sybille Allgaier.

Left President Obama and President Xi walk the golf course at Sunnylands. June 8, 2013.

Official White House photo.

In 1990, President George H. W. Bush called Prime Minister of Japan Toshiki Kaifu, inviting him to Sunnylands. In June 2013, similar circumstances led to President Obama's invitation to President Xi. President Bush was faced with trade tensions between the two then-largest economies—the United States and Japan; and President Obama also faced tensions between the two largest economies in 2013—the United States and China. The press, speculating on the focus of this presidential meeting, cited trade inequities, cyber theft, human rights, environmental concerns, and intellectual property rights. Both leaders knew that there was much work ahead for the two countries, but took an interesting path to begin the difficult journey. They agreed that it was prudent to meet in a relaxed atmosphere to simply create a personal connection in anticipation of the future working relationship. Many in the press immediately understood and began to analyze the subtext of the location as an important strategic element in the narrative between the two countries. A journalist for Reuters wrote:

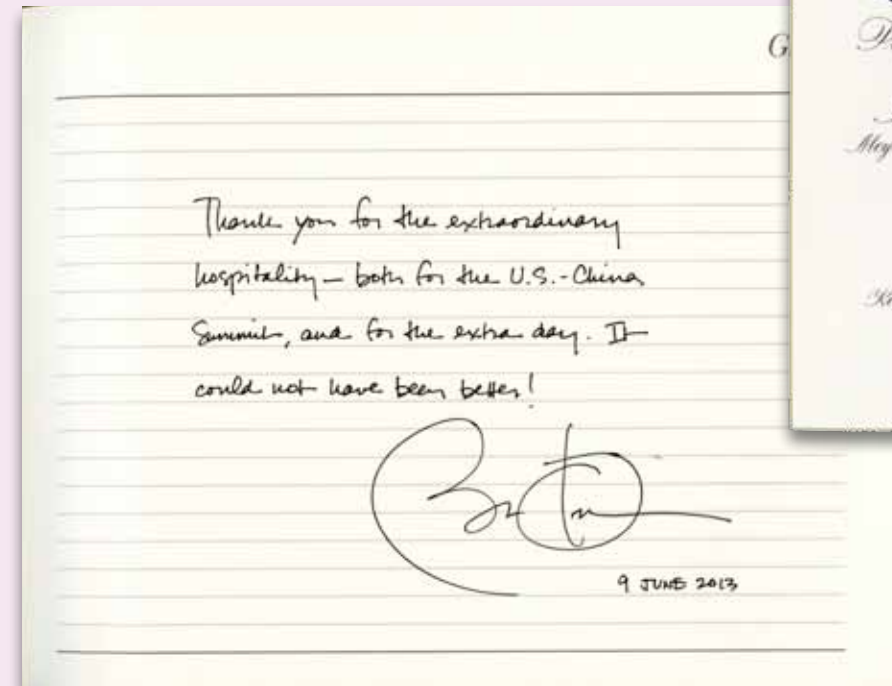
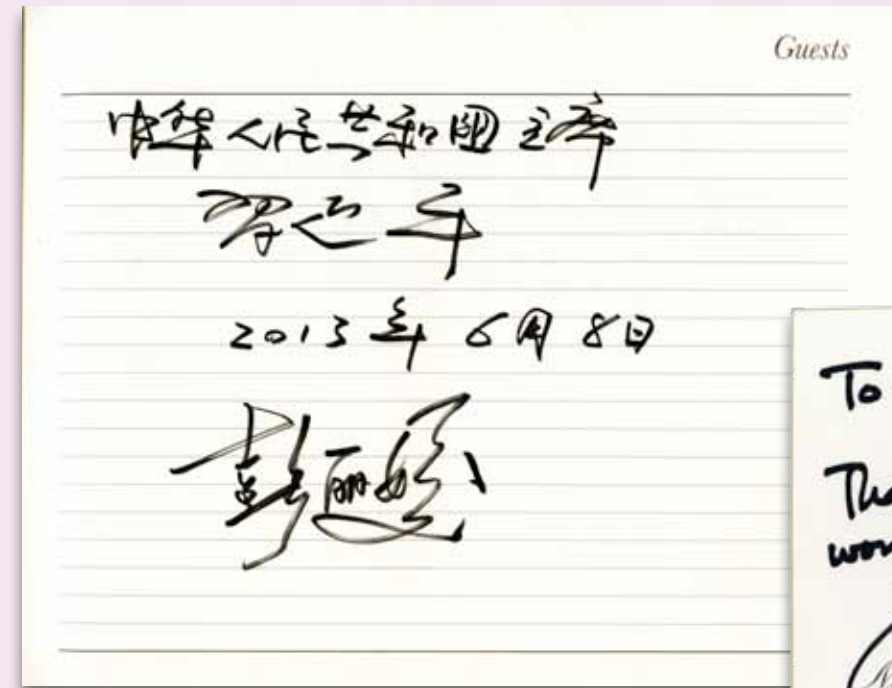


“ Meetings between leaders of the United States and China have mostly been dour, orchestrated affairs conducted by teams of men in dark suits. But China's new President Xi Jinping and U.S. President Barack Obama are shedding the script and neckties for their first summit, an informal get-together this week in the California desert. Since

President Richard Nixon's visit to Beijing in 1972, which broke decades of estrangement between the two countries, the summits have been carefully plotted rituals. One exception has been a visit by President Jiang Zemin to George W. Bush's ranch in Texas in 2002, but it was only for a few hours. But an informal setting suits both Obama and Xi and the payoff could be huge if they can build a rapport that brings the world's top two economies closer. Nevertheless, the short-sleeves meeting is shaping up as anything but relaxing—the two sides have to overcome differences on cyber-security, the South China Sea, North Korea and other issues. 'You'd never imagine that other Chinese leaders would agree to such a kind of meeting,' said Ruan Zongze, a former Chinese diplomat, of the summit at a lush private estate called 'Sunnylands' in the resort community of Rancho Mirage.' That's a very important message to the Americans: That we'd like to engage, we'd like to have discussions with them. I think Xi is more accessible and this will be a very good opportunity for Xi and Obama to build a better personal relationship,' said Ruan, Vice President of the China Institute of International Studies, a think-tank linked to the Chinese Foreign Ministry.⁷³

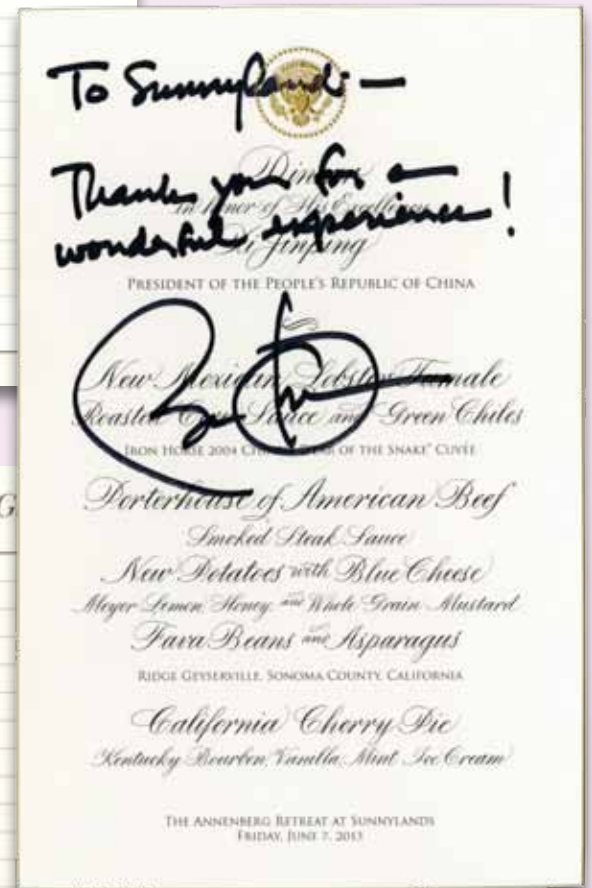
As the planning stages for hospitality carefully unfolded over several weeks, formality inevitably crept into the planning. After all, Sunnylands was hosting not one but two world leaders. Given the Sunnylands collection of best-in-class tabletop objects, including gilded candlesticks and royal-provenance service ware, which were used for previous presidents, one could become tempted by the opulence. The Sunnylands collections and operations teams worked with the White House to achieve the right level of formality and/or informality where indicated.

White House protocol staff arrived in waves over the planning stages and they asked to study previous events with a particular focus on details of the various protocols used during the Bush-Kaifu meeting. They were particularly interested in the flatware, linens, crystal, and china that were used for that 1990 event, as well as the menu and how the food and wines were



Opposite Geoffrey Cowan, President of The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands, greets Chinese President Xi and Madame Peng at Ontario airport. June 7, 2013. Sunnylands Collection.

Left Pages from the Sunnylands guestbook, and a menu from the official dinner. Sunnylands Collection.



served. They studied the Bush-Kaifu menu carefully and produced individual place setting menus on heavy card stock in a very similar format. Both President Bush and Prime Minister Kaifu signed a menu; Obama and Xi repeated this gesture. This card was presented to Sunnylands for inclusion in the archives. The protocol team also researched which guest rooms previous presidents had resided in while retreating at Sunnylands, and how each of the former presidents had signed the guest book.



No stone was unturned by Ambassador Capricia Marshall, Chief of Protocol for President Obama, in creating an extraordinary experience at Sunnylands toward advancing diplomacy between two leaders, as Leonore Annenberg had done for so many years at Sunnylands.

The presidential motorcade arrived at Sunnylands in the late afternoon of June 7, 2013. President Obama graciously shook hands and posed with the greeting committee comprised of Geoffrey Cowan, president of The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands; Cinny Kennard, senior adviser to the president of The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands; Pat Truchan, director of operations; and two trustees of The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands, Diane Deshong and her son, Howard Deshong III.

Following a brief interval, the president welcomed China's president, Xi Jinping, in the atrium at Sunnylands. To appease the enormous international press appetite for photos of the two leaders in this

unique atmosphere, a limited press pool was briefly provided access into the Sunnylands living room for a photo session. The two Presidents (donning collared shirts with no ties) posed seated in front of a Rembrandt Peale portrait of George Washington from the Sunnylands Collection, which the White House had specifically requested as a backdrop for this important photograph. The piece normally hangs in the Room of Memories. Members of both delegations found their place at a long table in the living room for a formal introduction, a warm welcome, and the second photo opportunity for members of the press who accurately and immediately understood that the casual approach to this important meeting was symbolic and historic. The events over the weekend were henceforth dubbed the "shirt-sleeves summit."

“The president had very good discussions in an informal atmosphere — uniquely informal atmosphere — with President Xi,” said Thomas E. Donilon, Obama’s national security adviser.

‘If you go back through studying each of the encounters between an American president and the leadership of China since President Nixon’s historic meeting in February of 1972 in China, I think the uniqueness and the importance of a number of aspects of this encounter really come to the fore,’ Donilon told reporters.⁷⁴”

Cocktails and dinner followed in the dining room at Sunnylands. Celebrity chef Bobby Flay prepared the dinner working alongside his own staff, Sunnylands staff, and other service personnel. Chef Flay paid a visit to the dining room to introduce his menu and wine pairings. The menu was American with a southwest flavor. It was also decidedly casual. Flay, working with the protocol team, created a menu reflecting the indigenous history of the Americas as well as the Southern California location where tamales are a traditional local favorite.

On day two of the meeting, a pre-arranged walk, or *amble* around the grounds was scheduled for the two leaders and their translators. This amble provided the presidents with time in a private, serene landscape in which to connect on a personal level. The amble



Opposite
President Obama greets President Xi at Sunnylands. June 7, 2013.

Official White House photo.

Left President Obama and President Jinping at Sunnylands. June 7, 2013.

Official White House photo.

Below Chef Bobby Flay addresses the table. June 7, 2013.

Official White House photo.

ran forty minutes longer than expected—a significant departure from the schedule. The leaders then transitioned from this personal encounter, the details of which are only known to them, back to their social and political duties. They posed on a California-made redwood bench that the White House presented as a gift to the president of China. The inscription read: “Presented to His Excellency Xi Jinping President of the People’s Republic of China by Barack Obama President of the United States, Sunnylands Annenberg Estate, June 7–8, 2013.” The bench also features a line written in Chinese, which reads: “California Redwood.”



Madame Peng Liyuan, President Xi’s wife, arrived at Sunnylands on the morning of June 8 for tea with Wallis Annenberg, daughter of Walter Annenberg and trustee of The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands. Presidents Xi and Obama joined them in the Royal Sitting Room where President George Bush had relaxed with Prime Minister Kaifu twenty-three years earlier.

By all accounts, the goals for this meeting were met. As planned, no concrete policies were advanced during the Obama-Xi encounter although general agreements on certain action items were reached. The writers of *press-citizen.com blog*, a Gannett publication, summarized the main outcomes of the conversations:

“White House National Security Adviser Tom Donilon said Obama and Xi talked in-depth about North Korea’s nuclear program, an issue that has long worried U.S. leaders and is increasingly agitating Chinese officials.

‘They agreed that North Korea has to denuclearize, that neither country will accept North Korea as a nuclear-armed state and that we would work together to deepen cooperation and dialogue to achieve denuclearization,’ Donilon said.

While no concrete steps were announced on North Korea policy during what was billed as a get-to-know-you visit in the southern California desert, the White House came away from the summit more confident that China is ready to work closely with the United States on the North Korea issue.”

Furthermore,

“The Pentagon also blamed China for cyber attacks in its annual report to U.S. lawmakers on Chinese military capabilities. The report, published in May, stated that some of the recent cyber attacks in the United States appeared ‘to be attributable directly to Chinese government and military.’

In their talks, Donilon said the president made clear that ‘if it’s not addressed, if it continues to be this direct theft of United States property, that this was going to be a very difficult problem in the economic relationship and was going to be an inhibitor to the relationship really reaching its full potential.’

Donilon added that Obama presented detailed examples of cyber theft, and told the Chinese officials that the U.S. government knows with certainty the intrusions are coming from within China, ‘It is now at the center of the relationship; it is not an adjunct issue,’ Donilon said.

On Friday, Obama noted to reporters the ‘deep concerns’ the U.S. government has about theft of intellectual property and hacking into private and government networks.

Opposite President Obama and President Xi sit on the redwood bench that was a gift to the Chinese President. June 8, 2013.

Official White House photo.

Left Madame Peng, President Xi, and President Obama in the Royal Sitting Room. June 8, 2013.

Official White House photo.



‘What both President Xi and I recognize is that because of these incredible advances in technology, that the issue of cybersecurity and the need for rules and common approaches to cybersecurity are going to be increasingly important as part of bilateral relationships and multilateral relationships,’ said Obama, adding that the world was entering ‘uncharted waters’ on the issue.

At a news conference hosted by the Chinese following the summit, China State Councilor Yang Jiechi downplayed differences between the two countries on cyber security.

‘China itself is also a victim of cyber attacks, and we are staunch supporters of cyber security,’ Yang said. ‘On cyber security, China and the United States both are faced with similar challenges. Cyber security should not become the root cause of mutual suspicion and friction between our two countries. Rather, it should be a new bright spot in our cooperation.’⁷⁵



Another specific mandate listed in the Declaration of Trust is that the estate property and its contents be maintained in excellent care. By all reports the White House and Blair House staff (the official presidential guest house in Washington, D.C.), who worked behind the scenes at Sunnylands to ensure perfect execution of the summit, were more than impressed with the home and its contents. Delivering the highest level of hospitality from the back-of-house of a former private home is not something they commonly enjoy. The Annenbergs maintained deep back-of-house storage rooms filled with a bounty of sterling and gilded silver, china, flatware, and crystal glassware patterns, an abundance of service wares, a rich assortment of various fine linens, and many other decorative table choices. In addition, the kitchen, pantries, and service areas are designed to accommodate large numbers of people working behind the scenes. President Obama, like many presidents before him, validated the unusual quality of the experience at Sunnylands when he signed the guest book. As he took his leave on June 9 following the twenty-four hour summit and twenty-four hour respite from scheduled time, he paused in the atrium to write:

“ Thank you for the extraordinary hospitality—both for the U.S. - China summit, and for the extra day. It could not have been better!

Barack Obama

9 June 2013

THE HISTORIC EXPERIENCE AT SUNNYLANDS

	THE GOOD START	THE SOFT TOUCH	THE EQUALIZER	BITTING PRETTY	THE TOTEM POLE	THE BAD BABY	THE DOUBLE DOBBLES	MOUNTAIN VIEW	THE HALF WAY	ELEGANTISSIMA	THREADING THE NEEDLE	THE CHUTE	THE CHALLENGER	THE WATER'S EDGE	INDULGENCE	THE MONSTER	THE CURVE	JOURNEY'S END			
WHITE TEE	334	341	452	141	418	160	426	387	325	2993	334	274	282	183	308	269	481	381	384	2076	5860
RED TEE	327	286	366	133	345	160	421	367	318	2723	328	267	274	164	272	213	438	347	340	2641	5364
HANDICAP	11	9	1	17	5	15	3	7	13		8	16	14	18	4	12	2	10	6		
PLAYER	BARACK	MICHE	MARV	BOBBY	PAR																
					HOLE																
SCORER																					



Opposite President Obama and President Xi sit outside the game room. June 8, 2013.

Official White House photo.

Left and below right Golf scorecard and golf ball from Obama's game at Sunnylands.

Sunnylands Collection.

Below left President Xi's place setting.

June 8, 2013.

Sunnylands Collection.

Epilogue

Retreat is defined as, “a place where one goes for peace.” By all accounts, this describes Sunnylands. The Annenbergs witnessed and harnessed the power of place at Sunnylands. They provided the luxury of time to leaders heavily burdened with civic responsibilities. Time was spent both individually and with others in a tranquil and inspiring space. Their thoughtful and indulgent attention to every detail of hospitality, unburdening their guests in every conceivable way, contributed directly to the transcendence of the experience.

In our most recent history, The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands working with the White House modeled protocols on the Annenberg template for hospitality in providing Presidents Obama and Xi private time together. Following the Annenberg best-in-class example, the Trust strives to continue to play a significant and unique facilitating role on the American and world stage.

Similarly, the Annenbergs adapted to a variety of diplomatic and social occasions at Sunnylands over the years, creating what was described by Nancy Reagan as a “heaven” for guests. Though important work was achieved at Sunnylands and continues to occur, it is interesting to note that guests cite the place and the hospitality as the components most lasting in their memory.



Right Aerial view of the grounds, featuring the Chinese Pavilion, 2012.

Photograph by Sybille Allgaier.

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Kamil Beski of Beski Projekts in Los Angeles and exhibition designer Karina White designed and installed the exhibition. Mark Davidson of Mark Davidson Photography provided photographs for this publication. This catalog and other collateral materials supporting the exhibition were designed by John Crummay and Robin Rout of JCRR Design.

Right The Annenbergs with four U.S Presidents.

Overleaf The Reagans depart Sunnylands by helicopter. January 2, 1984.

Official White House photo.

Official White House photo.



