

Houston Philosophical Society Dinner and Lecture

Cohen House, Rice University

15 March 2018

6:00pm cocktails - 9:00pm close

At 8:00 pm President Hall called the meeting to order and welcomed all. He reported that the Executive Committee had approved ten applications for membership, which will be presented at the April meeting for approval.

Guests of members were then introduced.

Secretary James Baker introduced Benedicte Valentiner, the former Chatelaine of Blair House (the U.S. President's guest house). Please see the attached Abstract for the Speaker's biography and program contents.

After questions and answers from the members, the meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

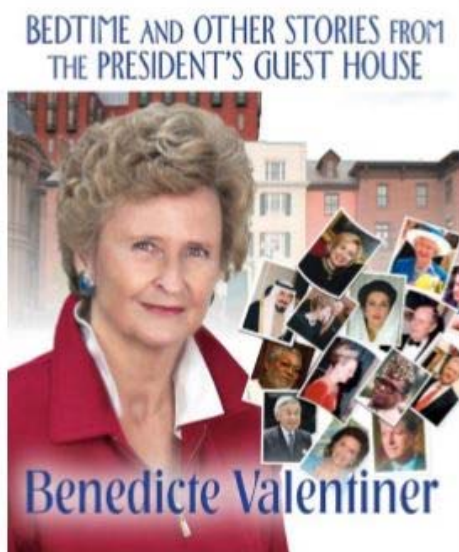
Program Abstract:

Across from the White House lies the intensely private Blair House complex, the world's most prestigious presidential guest house. Imagine a virtual tour conducted by its former general manager who will examine the Blair House's special role in hosting the official guests of the U.S. presidents, as well as its substantial role in America's 19th century history. She will discuss the importance of informal diplomacy in furthering American foreign policy objectives and gain a deeper understanding of the world's cultural differences. Amusing and sometimes shocking anecdotes will be shared.

Danish-born Benedicte Valentiner, author of ***Bedtime and Other Stories from the President's Guest House***, was Chatelaine of Blair House for more than 13 years. Her experiences include a BA from Copenhagen Business School, hotel training in Europe and the U.S., raptor research in Iran, maintaining a weaving

studio in Mexico and New Mexico, legislative experience working for the N.M. State Legislature and in the U.S. Senate for U.S. Senator Pete Domenici, as well as being protocol consultant to the Leland Stanford Mansion Foundation, CA. She has published numerous articles on world leaders, was an instructor at Chautauqua Institute, NY and is a member of the Explorers Club in New York City.

Speaker Bio:



2001-2006

Protocol Consultant to the Leland Stanford Mansion Foundation, Sacramento, California which restored the Mansion to be used as a protocol facility for the state's governor.

April 1988 – August 2001

General Manager of Blair House, the official guest house of the President of the United States, which provides accommodation for the world's chiefs of state and heads of government, and serves as a meeting place for the President's cabinet secretaries. I

worked for four U.S. Presidents, five administrations and six Secretaries of State. This period is the subject of my book *Bedtime and Other Stories from The President's Guest House*, published in Denmark 2010 and in the U.S. 2011.

April 1981 – April 1988

Director of Communications Division and Office Manager for U.S. Senator Pete V. Domenici (R-NM)

April 1976 – April 1981

Worked as Assistant to the Minority Whip of the House of Representatives, State of New Mexico in Santa Fe during their annual sessions, and also maintained a weaving studio.

April 1974 – April 1976

Lived in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, learning to weave at the Belles Artes, and to work in leather at the Instituto de Allende.

April 1972 – April 1974

Accompanied my first husband on an expedition to Iran, banding birds of prey for the Iranian government, also living six months in Spain.

April 1970 – April 1972

Living at Fort Bliss, Texas, I was Sales Manager of the Hilton Inn, also doing their weekly TV show

August 1963 – April 1970

Worked as Assistant to International Director of Sales, The Shoreham Hotel, Washington D.C.

Personal history and education

A native of Denmark, I became a U.S. citizen in 1969. Schooled in Denmark and Sweden, I graduated from Copenhagen Business School and trained in hotel business in Denmark and Switzerland starting my professional career in Scotland and continued when I arrived in Washington D.C. as an immigrant in 1963.

My first marriage, 1969 – 1981, ended in divorce. I married a friend of 40 years, an Australian, Commodore Adrian R. Cummins AO, RAN Ret., in 1998. Adrian died suddenly in January 2005. I live in our house outside Santa Fe, New Mexico with two wirehaired dachshunds.

Have published articles on Blair House, Benazir Bhutto, Hillary Clinton, Corazon Aquino, Margaret Thatcher, 9/11, Shimon Peres, and on my experience when Robert Kennedy was assassinated, and given many talks on Blair House including at Chautauqua Institute, NY August 2013 and 2015.

Am a member of The Explorers Club, NYC, and a recipient of the Ella Dickey Literacy Award.

Web site: www.benedictevalentiner.com