

Governor's aide gives Government House side

I noticed *The News American* recently asked for reader reaction to the Government House budget. In response, I would like to give you some background and details that were not fully reflected in press reports of a recent appropriations subcommittee review of the Executive Department budget.

The Governor and Mrs. Hughes are required to live in Government House, and the residence is equipped and maintained to permit the governor and the first lady — as official representatives of Maryland — to discharge the many ceremonial duties of the office. This has been true for all governors since Government House was completed in 1870 and Gov. Oden Bowie and his family took up residence.

Mrs. Hughes and Mrs. Ethel Tigner, house manager, generally are responsible for the preparation of the budget for Government House. In assuming this responsibility, they have taken steps to ensure that all costs associated with Government House are reflected properly. Heretofore, much of the costs of Government House were carried on the books of other state agencies, which tended to create an impression that the costs were lower than they actually were.

The household portion of Government House appropriations has remained at \$40,000 for the past five years, despite inflationary pressures and the continuing demands placed upon Gov. and Mrs. Hughes and their staff in fulfilling the ceremonial requirements historically associated with Government House. In 1980, for example, the governor and the first lady hosted 36 major dinners and receptions and a number of smaller events.

Obviously, meeting these obligations requires that Government House be properly equipped, a fact that the forebears of today's legislators recognized in 1866. Simply stated, there is insufficient china and silver to accommodate large dinners and receptions at Government House. Over the years, china has been broken and silver has been lost, and both Gov. and Mrs. Hughes believe it important that replacements be secured.

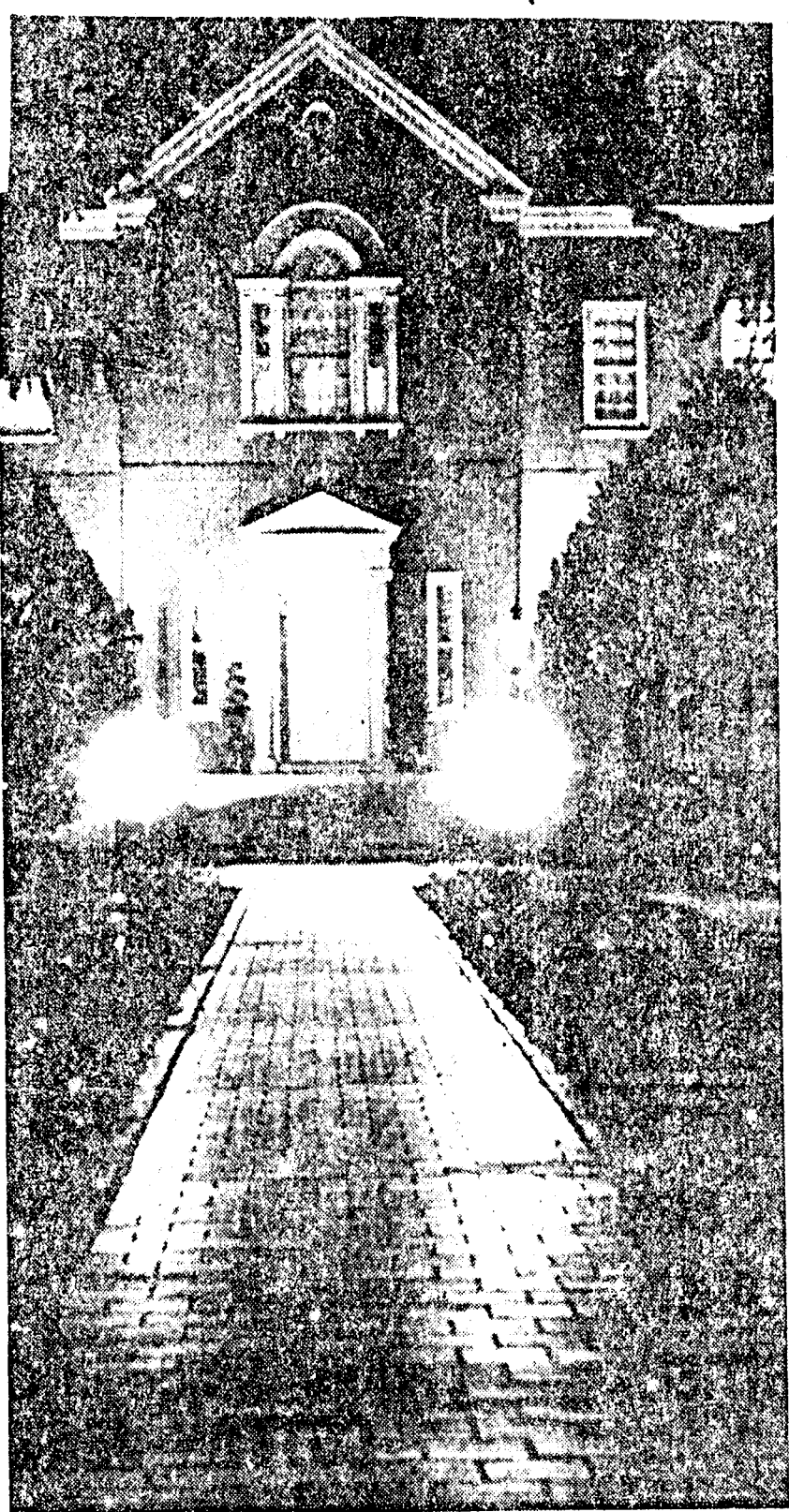
In living in Government House, both the governor and the first lady recognize their obligation in ensuring that the mansion is maintained properly as an historic home that played a vital part in the history of the state. Mrs. Hughes has been particularly active in the restoration of seven rooms within Government House without cost to the taxpayers. This is being accomplished by the selection and arrangement of works of art, furnishings and fabrics that

reflect state history and provide examples of the work of local artists and craftsmen, past and present. In effecting the reinstallation of the seven public rooms, Mrs. Hughes is working with the Gallery Committee of the Maryland Historical Society and the Maryland Commission on Artistic Property.

The goals of the project are being accomplished with the assistance of the Friends of Government House, a non-profit, non-political corporation created to channel private contributions for the project, thus avoiding expenditures of tax dollars for the purpose. As a matter of fact, Mrs. Hughes now has decided to enlist the assistance of the Friends of Government House, and perhaps others, in restoring the china and silver service, which is required to satisfy the ceremonial functions of office. An attempt will be made from private subscriptions to obtain sufficient funds for this purpose, and Mrs. Hughes has instructed me to notify both the House Appropriations Committee and the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee to delete from the budget request for Government House the funds requested for the china and silver.

Permit me to address quickly two other issues that arose during the discussion of the budget recommended for Government House in fiscal 1982. First, Mrs. Hughes does have an aide in addition to Mrs. Tigner. This individual, Mrs. Myrtle Halperin, performs professional staff functions, such as preparing responses to inquiries, maintaining Mrs. Hughes' schedule, preparing materials for Mrs. Hughes' remarks on official occasions, which requires research. Mrs. Halperin attends meetings of senior staff and program aides in the Governor's office, so that she can be of even greater assistance to Mrs. Hughes when she discharges official duties. Previous newspaper articles indicated that Mrs. Halperin was the first such person on the staff of a governor's wife. Such is not the case. I personally recall that Mrs. Anne Thompson served in that capacity for Mrs. Agnew, and the Lees both had professional assistance for their wives and, prior to Mrs. Halperin, Mrs. Hughes was served by Ms. Geni Dunnells. Mrs. Hughes expanded the duties associated with the position and, unfortunately, newspaper reports of these additional duties created the false impression that a new position had been created.

Second, it is true that Mrs. Hughes has secured the services of a third cook on a contractual basis. She did so to avoid the payment of



GOVERNMENT HOUSE: "The governor and the first lady recognize their obligation in ensuring that the mansion is maintained properly as an historic home."

overtime to the other two cooks and to eliminate Government House's former dependence on the costly use of private caterers. A contractual cook provides greater flexibility in meeting the demands of a schedule that requires the services of cooks on a seven-day-a-week basis. And, indeed, the salaries of the two remaining cook positions were raised — in one instance from \$9,625 to \$16,257 and the other from \$11,667 to \$17,234 — to permit Government House to attract and retain competent personnel.

The unfortunate aspect about this story is that some have attempted to convey the impression that the Governor and Mrs. Hughes are insensitive to the plight of the

disadvantaged in times of tight budgets. Nothing could be further from the truth. The governor worked unceasingly during the latter months of 1980 in the preparation of his budget proposals for fiscal 1982 to do essentially two things — avoid a tax increase and prevent hardships from being imposed on the poor, ill and disadvantaged. He feels his responsibilities most keenly — even those that impose (on) him a fiduciary responsibility for maintaining the traditions and the heritage of this state.

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