

# The Washington Post Starts Something

This

## CHANGING WHIRL



By Hope Ridings Miller

### *Farewell to Society*

Believing it is high time somebody steps out and puts Washington's prewar social picture where it belongs in a wartime capital, the society staff of The Post today begins a new treatment of a scene that has been viewed from much the same perspective since the days of Dolly Madison.

Skimming the starchy surface of a city where protocol has ruled the social wave for generations, society reporters, we fear, have written to please that comparatively small group that makes up so-called society, rather than to interest the thousands of other readers who are just as important in the Washington scene.

With the exception of members of the Cabinet, foreign envoys and leaders of Congress—all of whom naturally, and rightfully, occupy a sizable share of the social spotlight—the emphasis of most society pages has fallen on ambitious persons who carefully consult the social register when giving their parties (and who give plenty of parties), or on persons who will go to any lengths to get their names, and pictures, in the newspapers.

"Just so you spell the name right" has long been the unofficial theme song of a comparatively small group of exhibitionists who have filled countless Washington social

columns—to the despair of the town as a whole, and to the dismay of millions throughout the country who read with avid interest, yet wonder what on earth this Capital sideshow is coming to.

If America at large understood the Washington picture—if every taxpayer from coast to coast realized that virtually every important party in this town is for a very definite purpose, it might be all right for those of us who cover the Capital scene to continue playing the social angle for all it is worth.

But letters flooding my desk from all over the country shortly after a news service spread the alarm that the onset of war had increased the number of Washington parties convinced me that many Americans still feel that Capital society fiddled while Bataan burned and that most capital celebrities are far more concerned with their social calendars than with winning the war.

Since nothing could be farther from the truth, obviously there is something wrong with the manner in which the Capital's social picture has been interpreted. Fact is, more emphasis has been placed on the parties than the people who gave them. Perhaps far too many paragraphs have been written about

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July 19, 1944

## And The Country Applauds...

## Social Revolution

The front page of the ten-page section that The Washington Post used to label Society last Sunday carried a small picture of Queen Wilhelmina and a much larger one of Miss Helen Lindamood of Peach Bottom, Pa. The Queen rated a picture because as head of an Allied government she had visited the White House. Miss Lindamood got in because she's doing an outstanding job in an arms factory. Under The Post's new policy of handling "society" news, who's doing what to win the war is of more interest than the tea parties of the most aristocratic cliff dweller.

This social revolution was begun July 19 by Mrs. Hope Ridings Miller, who even expurgated the words "social" and "society" from the department she has headed for five years. In announcing her declaration of independence in dealing with those whose only claim to prominence is their Social Register listing or their party-giving, Mrs. Miller found it "high time somebody steps out and puts Washington's prewar social picture where it belongs in a wartime capital."

Henceforth it will be her policy "to play up people rather than parties and to throw the spotlight on personalities who are contributing to the war effort." She says it won't turn her department into "just another woman's page; we'll do men too, if we can find any." Her department will occupy as much space as usual; brides and brides-elect will get the same play as before. But purely personal social events will be reported briefly, if at all.

Mrs. Miller decided on the purge when the war was brought home personally to her by her husband's plans to join the Army Medical Corps. But she had been thinking of it for a long time. Texas-born, Texas-educated, and Texas- outspoken, she comments: "I've been resenting all this for years because, although I'm no Communist, I am a Democrat and I couldn't stand the old formula of society reporting."

## EDITOR &amp; PUBLISHER

## ADIEU TO SOCIETY

The Washington (D. C.) Post announced July 19 that for the duration of the war it would "report briefly, if at all, on any purely social event." Under the heading "Farewell to Society," the Post noted that reporting of society news in Washington had changed very little since the days of Dolly Madison. "The emphasis of most society pages," said Hope Ridings

Miller, the Post's society editor, "has fallen on ambitious persons who carefully consult the Social Register when giving parties (and who give plenty of parties) or on persons who will go to any lengths to get their names and pictures in the newspapers." In the future, the Post explained, it will have a society page but will feature those people who are doing war work.

## NEW YORK TIMES

AN ADIEU TO SOCIETY  
BY WASHINGTON POST

To Give Social Events Briefly  
if at All While War Lasts

Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

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Under the heading "Farewell to Society," The Post noted that reporting of society news in Washington had changed very little since the days of Dolly Madison.

"The emphasis of most society pages," said Hope Ridings Miller, The Post's society editor, "has fallen on ambitious persons who carefully consult the Social Register when giving parties (and who give plenty of parties) or on persons who will go to any lengths to get their names and pictures in the newspapers."

In the future, The Post explained, it will have a society page but will feature those people who are doing war work.

"We shall feature personalities (men and women) who are contributing to the war effort," The Post said, "visitors (royalty or commoner) whose arrival on the Capital scene obviously is connected with the fight for the survival of democratic peoples and newcomers who bring us a fresh perspective on the task at hand. In other words, for the duration; and probably longer—we are finished with society-as-such."

# "Top Hats Are Out—Overalls Are In," Says Post Society Editor And Newspapers and Magazines Hail the Revolution!

It was The Washington Post's Hope Ridings Miller who started it all. A few Sundays ago Society Editor Miller came out with a lead article entitled "Farewell to Society"—and she meant just that. She blasted at the sterility of Society-as-usual... insisted that today readers of an alert newspaper want news about war-working people instead of party givers... promised Society pages bulked with stories about them! Contributors (physically and mentally) to the war effort, Red Cross workers, women behind the men behind the guns—people rather than parties were to be featured.

And how was this war-inspired, ahead-of-the-crowd Post idea received nationally? Take a look at the clippings from newspapers and magazines.

It's the old story...

When something new, important happens in the publishing business you can usually find it in The Washington Post.

## DANBURY, CONN. NEWS-TIMES

## Washington Society

The Washington Post has announced that for the duration of the war it will "report briefly, if at all, on any purely social event." This has reference to the items that used to appear on its society page. It was guided in days of normalcy by the Social Register and by the names of the people who accepted invitations to parties. It found that there are some persons who will go to any length to get their names in the paper.

Now the paper is to have a real society page, in which it will feature the names of people who are doing war work, rather than cultivating the family tree. Now it's considered smarter in Washington to be doing something to help win the war than to be giving parties simply to show off the silver service or a new butler. "We are finished with society-as-such," says Hope Riding Miller, society editor.

The standards which used to mean a lot to those addicted to dinner parties and receptions now seem pretty shallow. Snobbishness and a position attained through

money still impress some Americans. Most of us have an innate fondness for celebrities, but now we insist that those celebrities be people worth celebrating. The sociable gatherings that we have here in Danbury are not Society news; we read about them because we like to know what our friends are doing. When Greta Garbo drops in on us, we report what she does, just as we report a card party or a covered dish supper.

People are sociable, more so than Society. In Latin, "socius" means "a companion, or friend." True society, even in the dictionary, connotes fellowship and congenial company. The alleged elite never had a legitimate claim to the word. Ironically, we used a capital letter to differentiate between them and plain, everyday men and women.

Probably only a handful of pretty stuffy persons will miss the society page of the Washington Post. It was beginning to look archaic, like the pug dog and the hitching post.

## ADVERTISING AGE

'Washington Post'  
Takes the Plunge:  
'Society' Is Out

Washington, D. C., July 21.—Beginning what may develop into a trend toward abandonment of "society as usual" insofar as the nation's metropolitan dailies are concerned, the Washington Post has announced that it will "report briefly, if at all, on any purely social event."

The Post, it was explained by Hope Ridings Miller, society editor, will continue to have a society page, but it will feature people who are doing war work. She also dropped a strong hint that the new practice of banning "society-as-such" will probably be continued even after the war.

"The emphasis on most society pages," she said, "has fallen on ambitious persons who carefully consult the Social Register when giving parties (and who give plenty of parties) or on persons who will go to any lengths to get their names and pictures in the newspapers."

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## Society Item



PM's Bureau

WASHINGTON, July 21.—The Washington Post yesterday struck at the very foundations of Society with the announcement that its editors were "finished with society-as-such."

Hereafter, said the Post, its society news will play up people rather than parties, with chief emphasis on personalities who contribute to the war effort.

## Not Too Belligerent

THE Washington Post makes a noble gesture of patriotic renunciation when it announces, under a heading "Farewell to Society," that it will "report briefly, if at all, on any purely social event" for the duration of the war. Considerign that the social columns of most Washington newspapers have doted, without discrimination, on lush and roccoco entertainments, no matter who gave them, this is real self-denial. The Post has been one of the most conservative in handling such "news."

But Washington, although a world capital, remains at heart a small town, a small Southern town. Like other small towns, people want to know what the neighbors are doing. If those neighbors happen to range from the President of the United States downward through official and unofficial groups and cliques, that makes it all the more interesting. Some superpersonal chit-chat in some Washington newspapers has been a bit sickening. But it must be said that some of the solemn reporting of dinners and cocktail parties has been sometimes more sickening than some of the gushing and purple prose devoted to such occasions.

Still, we all like to see our names in the paper. All of us like to feel important. All of us like to read about our neighbors. Even The Washington Post is still going to have a society page. But it will feature people who are doing war work, including visiting royalties. It just happens that "society" people are among the most assiduous in serving on committees, organizing benefits and otherwise furthering more or less useful causes. So perhaps the new society page of The Washington Post won't be as belligerent as its publisher intends.

TIME

The Washington Post last week pronounced a "Farewell to Society," announced that it would give over its society page to reporting the doings of people prominent in war work. "For the duration, and probably longer," said the Post, "we are finished with society-as-such."

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who was there (generally the same persons, time after time); what they wore; and the paper-thin sandwiches and cocktails they consumed.

We propose to reverse the treatment—to play up people rather than parties; to throw the spotlight on personalities who are contributing to the war effort; to help our readers get acquainted with the important newcomers whose time and talents are being devoted to winning the war: to give credit where credit is due to scores of women who are working all day at canteens, as nurse's aides, at organizing entertainments for soldiers and benefits of any type or description. We shall continue to cover important parties because they have a definite connection with the war effort, but we shall try to keep our enthusiasm well within bounds and so long as war continues—and probably longer—we shall report briefly, if all all, on any purely social event.

Brides and brides-elect we consider as important as ever. Still in the category of vital statistics, weddings shall be reported as fully as our space will permit. Goings and comings are also a highly interesting part of the shifting scene and we shall continue to mention them in the space formerly headed "Society Notes" and now entitled "Purely Personal."



**H**OW EXACTLY will this section be different from now on?

This is how:

We shall feature personalities (men and women) who are contributing to the war effort; visitors (royalty or commoner) whose arrival on the Capital scene obviously is closely connected with the fight for the survival of democratic peoples; and newcomers who bring us a fresh perspective on the task at hand.

In other words, for the duration—and probably longer—we are finished with society-as-such. We are interested only in contributing our bit towards preservation of the only kind of world in which any of us would care to live.

Therefore, for the present we are forgetting that there has ever been such a word as "society." We propose to cover This Changing Whirl in a manner that will faithfully mirror the wartime Capital . . . and we believe you will like it.

In a modest way, this issue of our section has started the ball rolling. Our front page, as you have seen, presents the first photographs ever to be published of the mobile canteen of the Red Cross on night duty in a nearby area. Carolyn Bell, whose "Diplomatic Circling" column has hitherto been devoted to oddments of interest from the foreign contingent, today tells a complete story of the war work of one ambassador's wife.

Patricia Grady's column, formerly called "Top Hats And Tiaras," has given place to the same writer's more up-to-the-minute "Now Is The Time . . ." Elizabeth Henney, daughter of a general, who knows the service set inside out, is preparing a series on the women-behind-the-men-behind-the-guns. Peggy Preston, niece of a former Army Chief of Staff, will give special attention to service weddings, brides-elect, and visitors. Nina Carter Tabb's column—formerly "The Hunt Country"—will throw the spotlight on wartime activities "Down Virginia Way," and our correspondents in Leesburg and Berryville will cover similar sources of news in their sections. The same will be true of our correspondents in Annapolis, Chevy Chase, Takoma Park and Silver Spring, Md., and our contributors in numerous other sections.

The job, as we well know, will not be easy . . . but with your cooperation we are confident we can chart a new course—one which will be entirely in keeping with This Changing Whirl.

# The Washington Post

Washington's Home Morning Newspaper