

Harry S. Truman – Life at the White House

Harry Truman: When you live in the White House, you live pretty high. Sometimes I would have dinner alone, and I will describe it to you.

First the head butler, Fields, a great big 200-pounder and a fine-looking man, and a very fine person, would come in and say very seriously: "Mr. President, dinner is served."

I'd walk into the dining room. Barnard, another of the butlers, was one of my servants too. Barnard, in tails and necktie, would pull out my chair, push me up to the table. And he looked very, very, very much like the pictures you see of butlers in these high hat houses. Brings me a fruit cup. Barnard takes away the empty cups. Fields brings me a plate. Barnard brings me a tenderloin. Fields brings me asparagus. Barnard brings me carrots and beets. I have to eat alone and in silence in a candlelit room. If you don't believe I was getting service, you never saw any. [Laughs]

I ring, and Barnard takes the plate away, and the butter plates, and Fields comes in with a napkin and silver crumb tray. There are no crumbs, but Fields has to brush them off the table anyway.

Barnard brings me a plate with a finger bowl and a doily on it. I remove the finger bowl and the doily, and John puts a glass saucer and a little bowl on a plate. Barnard brings me some chocolate custard. Fields brings me a demitasse. At home, that's a little cup of coffee with about two cups in it.

[Laughter]

And my dinner is over. I take a hand bath in the finger bowl and go back to work. And what a life that was.

Bess Truman: [Laughing] What am I supposed to say?