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SECTION

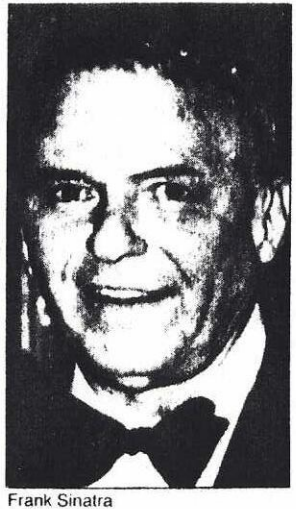
KAREN On Tuesday

There's no thanks for the memories on Connecticut Avenue, but **President Reagan** is probably safer now at the Washington Hilton, scene of the 1981 assassination attempt, than at any other hotel in the world.

Hilton has quietly invested almost $200,000 in an underground steel bunker, unnoticed except by President Reagan, **George Bush, Bill Casey** and, of course, the Secret Service. When the president goes to the hotel, as he did just the other day for the National Prayer Breakfast, he no longer has to go through a loading dock or back corridor as VIPs do in most other hotels. Instead, he enters in style through a secure, private *porte cochere*, an idea of hotel general manager **Bill Edwards**. The president makes about two dozen appearances there a year.

Designed by the original architect of the hotel, **William Tabler** of New York, and coordinated with the Secret Service, the 30-by-20-foot concrete and steel porte cochere provides a visual barrier and adjoining secure holding area. Hilton built it to enhance the existing VIP entrance on the T Street side. Taxis routinely drive through it, but when a VIP arrives — the president, vice president or CIA director — his car pulls in, and the rolling steel doors shut.

There is a control box inside, high-speed exhaust fans to remove auto fumes, and decorative lighting. The quarry stone on the outside matches that originally used when the hotel was built in 1965. Inside is a private elevator which takes the president down one story to a holding area, a private apartment which includes a comfortable living room and bathroom with red and white towels monogrammed in Nancy's favorite colors with his initials. (When the vice president is expected, the towels are changed to those with his initials, of course.) A private corridor connects that apartment, designed according to Secret Service needs, directly to the ballroom stage.


Frank Sinatra

When **Barbara** and **John Lehman** sent over a box of chocolate-chip cookies to The Times to cheer up **Arnaud de Borchgrave**, out of Washington Hospital Center where he had tests after he collapsed at his office, the secretary of the Navy enclosed this message: "These secret Navy cookies are better than chicken soup — so secret even the Walkers never got the recipe." Liz Smith, the Gotham gossipist, sent a greeting, too: "Probably fitting that your heart stopped, considering all the hearts *you* have stopped in your time." Arnaud's heart didn't stop, actually, but Liz probably got the rest of it right.

Social Washington should know Perrier is out, and something called Voslau water is in. That's from the tasting experts at the party for **Jennifer Lang's** new book, "Tastings." **Betsey** and **Johnny Apple** tossed the do at Germaine's for the former OP food columnist (she was Jennifer Harvey then). Jennifer now lives in the Big Apple (no kin to Johnny) with her husband, restaurateur **George Lang**. She's accustomed to careful research. She's researching now for the shopping in Hong Kong, where George is designing the restaurants in the new Regent Hotel.

Friends of **Frank Sinatra** are concerned about rumors that his health is failing rapidly. He keeps delaying his Atlantic City Golden Nugget bookings. He's now booked for late April. Close pals have been called to his Palm Springs compound, and say that after a couple of drinks he can get melancholy, and refers to himself as a dying man. His second corrective colon surgery, according to insiders, isn't the end of problems in that area. It's said to be a result of a disorder he neglected years ago.

Arrangements had been made for Liberace to undergo treatment for AIDS-related illnesses at NIH last month, but he never regained consciousness long enough to make the trip. His entourage had planned to stay nearby at the Marriott in Bethesda. Insiders say Sy Heller, Liberace's manager, who plans to merchandise his client's name like Col. Parker did after Elvis' death, fears the late entertainer's fans would be offended if it became known that he suffered from AIDS.

— Karen Feld