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ID # 109475

WHITE HOUSE
OFFICE OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT
WORKSHEET

- ☐ X - MEDIA
☐ H - INTERNAL

Subject Codes:

PR007.01

WE001.01

Name of Document: BRIEFING PAPERS FOR
PRESIDENT'S SCHEDULED
APPOINTMENTS FOR

NOV 05 82

1) Subject: Meeting with the Robert and
Dorothy DEBOLT family to
recognize their support of
adoption of handicapped
and disadvantaged
children

ROUTE TO:

ACTION

DISPOSITION

Office/Agency (Staff Name)	Action Code	Tracking Date YY/MM/DD	Type of Response	Code	Completion Date YY/MM/DD
RMMATT	RSZ	1 / 1			1 / 1

Referral Note:

THE SCHEDULE OF
PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN



Friday, November 5, 1982

9:30 am (15 min)	<u>National Security Briefing</u> (Clark)	Oval Office
9:45 am (30 min)	<u>Meeting with Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick</u> (Clark)	Oval Office
10:15 am (5 min)	<u>Courtesy Visit by Mr. and Mrs. Robert DeBolt</u> (Small)	Oval Office
	(Tab A)	
10:20 am (60 min)	<u>Dental Appointment</u> (Ruge)	Dr. Ruge's Office
11:20 am	<u>Personal Staff Time for Remainder of the Day</u>	Residence

UNP 11/4/82
5:00 pm

Get



Friday, November 5, 1982

9:30 am (15 min)	<u>National Security Briefing</u> 9:25 - 9:51 (Clark) <i>BUSH, McFARLAND, Em</i>	Oval Office
9:45 am (30 min)	<u>Meeting with Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick</u> 9:52 - 10:19 (Clark)	Oval Office
10:15 am (5 min)	<u>Courtesy Visit by Mr. and Mrs. Robert DeBolt</u> 10:24 - 10:29 (Small)	Oval Office
	(Tab A)	
10:20 am (60 min)	<u>Dental Appointment</u> 10:37 (Ruge)	Dr. Ruge's Office
11:20 am	<u>Personal Staff Time for Remainder of the Day</u>	Residence

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

November 4, 1982

COURTESY CALL BY THE DEBOLT FAMILY

DATE: Friday, November 5, 1982
LOCATION: Oval Office
TIME: 10:15 a.m. (5 minutes)
FROM: Karna Small *KS*

I. PURPOSE:

To greet the DeBolt family and give recognition to their unselfish dedication to their project of adopting -- and helping other families to adopt -- handicapped and disadvantaged children.

II. BACKGROUND:

Dorothy and Bob DeBolt are from the East Bay (San Francisco Bay Area) and have become quite well known since they started adopting children no one else would take in: blind, crippled, abandoned children from many countries such as Korea, Vietnam and even Biafra. Besides their own 6 children, they have adopted 14 others. They have also organized an adoption agency to help place other such children around the country.

They are in town because Dorothy DeBolt was honored at a large dinner Wednesday night hosted by W. Clement Stone. Nancy Reagan did a video tape greeting which praised their work - the tape was shown at the dinner. (See attached clipping)

They are strong Reagan supporters and you saw them in 1976 when they were guests in your Pacific Palisades home and you viewed a network documentary that was made about them and their adopted children.

III. PARTICIPANTS:

- The President
- Dorothy DeBolt
- Robert DeBolt
- May DeBolt (grandmother)
- Doni DeBolt (daughter)
- Karna Small

FISCHER
IV. PRESS PLAN:

White House Photographer only

V. SEQUENCE OF EVENTS:

Karna Small will escort DeBolt family into the Oval Office for brief greeting and photo.

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The Gift of Family

Love and Laughter: The DeBolts and Their 20 Kids

By Carla Hall

DOROTHY AND Robert DeBolt have 20 children. "Now, when we left home, it was 20," says Robert DeBolt straight-faced, "but it might be more."

Actually, only seven of those 20 live in the DeBolt home in Piedmont, Calif., near San Francisco. It is a large, old, three-story house. "It has seven bedrooms, but more importantly it has six bathrooms," says Robert DeBolt. The largest number of children in the house at one time was 16.

To say that theirs is a diverse household is an understatement. Five children are from Dorothy DeBolt's previous marriage. One is from Robert DeBolt's previous marriage. The remaining 14 were adopted. Several of them are Amerasian, one is black.

Some of the adopted children are paraplegic or have other physical handicaps. Some are blind, some have a combination of problems. All had something that made them difficult to be adopted.

"With my first husband, we had four healthy children born to us in four years," Dorothy DeBolt says.

"We felt very blessed. We didn't have much money, but we had other things. We felt the need to say 'Hey, God, thank you, we're lucky.' We decided to show it by adopting children."

They began by adopting unwanted children—those left in hospitals or shuttled through foster homes. In the 27 years since, Dorothy DeBolt and her second husband, Robert, have started an agency—Aid to Adoption of Special Kids—to promote and facilitate adoption of hard-to-place children, and they have made careers out of speaking on how they have raised their own family. There have been two films made about the DeBolts—one was the Academy Award-winning "Who Are the DeBolts—And Where Did They Get 19 Kids?" (made before they got the 20th). After that, there was a book.

Last night, there was an award. Dorothy DeBolt received the 1982 "Endow a Dream" Award from the W. Clement and Jessie V. Stone Foundation. It carries a \$50,000 grant and honors "an individual, who through his or her own positive mental attitude, has overcome adversity."

See DEBOLTS, C9, Col. 1



Robert & Dorothy DeBolt, by James M. Thresher, & a portrait from the family album



and gone on to make significant contributions to the betterment of humanity." She was nominated by their 22-year-old daughter, Doni, who joined the growing family when her father and Dorothy were married.

As embodiments of the positive mental attitude that Stone espouses, the DeBolts certainly qualify. "We have a terrible time looking at things as problems," she says. "I don't mean to be Pollyanna-ish..."

"We're not martyrs or saints," says Robert DeBolt. "If we had a lot of problems, we wouldn't do it. Because of these handicaps, the child has to take a close look at himself at an early age. I might have been 35 when I took a close look at myself."

The DeBolts take turns telling anecdotes about the children. She is tall and slim, with high cheekbones. He has gray hair, thick eyebrows and a strong face. A civil engineer by profession, he gave up his job as president of an Oakland construction company to help start the adoption agency and launch a full-time speaking career. "I became a corporate dropout," he says. "I'm ungainfully employed." Their \$50,000-a-year income comes from lecture tours (the \$50,000 Dorothy received with the Stone award will go to their adoption agency). They have a folder of material on themselves and a list of suggested speech topics: "Love, Laughter, and Twenty Kids," "From Burn-Out to Bonfire," "Parenting in the '80s," "Society Says 'Handicapped'—We Say 'Challenged.'"

On Robert DeBolt's right hand is a large, oval turquoise ring. On his left hand is a gold wedding band that matches his wife's. Both wedding bands are inscribed: "Thank you, God."

"We believe deeply in God," she says. "But we're very unritualistic."

She is 58. He is 51. "She didn't marry me," he says. "She adopted me."

Dorothy DeBolt already had given birth to five children and adopted two Amerasian children when her first husband, an insurance broker, died. The youngest child was 3 at the time. With life insurance money, she put a down payment on the house in Piedmont. She was making \$775 a month. "We were all working," she said. "I was working part-time, teaching piano and speaking. I begged service clubs to let me speak. Then I began speaking to clubs with budgets—interfamily relations, parenting, a career and mothering."

Then she got a call from an organization trying to place severely wounded Vietnamese children. "A woman asked if I could recruit families for these two 14-year-olds. I remember my mother—she's Swedish—used to say to me, 'Doora,' she says, mimicking her mother's Swedish accent, 'you haf to learn to listen to God through your ears, not through your stoo-mach.' I was on the phone with this woman, and God said, 'Okay, Dora, why don't you take them?' My head said, 'No.' My stomach said, 'yes.'"

She took them in.

Two months later, with nine children, she met Robert DeBolt.

"She was a doll," he says. "It was a blind date. The man who owned the

The DeBolts & Their 20 Kids



Dorothy DeBolt; by James M. Thresher—The Washington Post

company I ran—his wife was an avocational matchmaker... She probably fixed me up on 110 dates. I told her, 'No more.' I really hated to hear the phone ring—I thought it was Jean with another body. Then she asked me to take a friend of hers to a Christmas party they were having. Jean said to me, 'Ted says he thinks she might be too much for you.' I said, 'What?!!'

"Here's what she did to me," says Dorothy DeBolt with a grin. "Jean called and said, 'I know you don't ordinarily do this, but I'd love you to meet this guy. He's a lovely man, good with kids.' She said, 'I've fixed him up with a lot of nice ladies, but what he wants is someone intelligent. If she'd said he wanted a sexy broad, I would have said 'No way.'"

"What she really fixed me up with was a sexy, intelligent woman," says Robert DeBolt.

"Ahhh, thank you, darling," she says.

After the DeBolts were married, they moved into the Piedmont house, with Robert bringing his 10-year-old daughter, Doni. The reaction in Piedmont had been mixed since Dorothy DeBolt had arrived. "My immediate neighbor was lovely, others weren't so sure... I got a note from a neighbor one time that said, 'You, Dorothy, are a traitor to this country.' It was the Vietnam war and I had these Amerasian children." She also found little hate notes in her mailbox: "Why don't you take these little bastard children and move out?"

"But then it came full circle," she says. "After people realized what we were doing, they really tried to help." And the local school system, the De-

Bolts say, supported what they were doing from the start. "Now, people run around saying, 'The DeBolts live here! The DeBolts live here!'"

"Would you believe," says Robert DeBolt, leaning forward in his chair, "we're on the Gray Line tour?"

Their family has been a success, they say, but it has not been without problems. "Dorothy and I have made more mistakes than other parents," says Robert DeBolt. "God knows we've had enough chances."

"We had a tendency to scold and say 'You're bad,' instead of saying, 'You're such a good child. Why would you do such a dumb thing?'" says Dorothy DeBolt.

"We have a tendency to underestimate the adaptability of children," says Robert DeBolt. "These children can come from some of the damndest backgrounds, and they can adjust."

One child they adopted together was J.R.—10 years old, wheelchair-bound, blind, 40 pounds overweight from having been treated as a vegetable and stuffed with food in one temporary home after another. "But his greatest handicap was his lack of self-esteem," says Dorothy DeBolt. "The first time he walked on crutches, he did it for me as a Mother's Day gift. He would only do things like that for others. But now, he's so motivated he's driving us crazy." Today, he is 18, walking with braces and crutches, slimmed down, in 10th grade, an honor student and secretary of the student body. He also was campaign volunteer in California State Sen. Milton Marks' unsuccessful reelection bid this fall.

There is a daughter, Karen—black, born without legs and arms. Karen, 16, who uses artificial limbs, walks eight blocks to high school and was voted outstanding musician at her school. (She plays marimba.) She also swims at the local pool, without her prostheses. "No one pays any attention to her," says Robert DeBolt. "When she first came, everyone stared. She looked like a seal with her stumps flapping. Swims like one, too."

But there also are problems that more typical households have: Everyone must have assigned chores or nothing gets done. There are no babysitters, and a cleaning woman comes only occasionally. "She's there a few hours and her eyes glaze over," says Dorothy DeBolt.

"We took out the television set about seven years ago—that's what caused friction and arguing," said Dorothy DeBolt. "They would sit and stare at the boob tube and argue about who's going to watch what." (However, someone recently sent them one as a gift. They watch it on weekends.)

They always eat dinner together—at two tables pushed together when necessary. And they try to talk about the problems. "We've had kids experiment with marijuana," says Dorothy DeBolt. "We're not going to say we don't. But no one's gone off the deep end. They all have their problems, their fears, their crushes on boys, whether they're paraplegic or not. But I tell my kids, 'You're so much luckier than I was.' I was so boy crazy, so moody. I don't know how my mother put up with me."