

# Bush Fund-Raisers Among Overnight Guests

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By SHARON THEIMER, Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON - President Bush opened **the White House and Camp David** to dozens of overnight guests last year, including foreign dignitaries, family friends and at least **nine of his biggest campaign fund-raisers**, documents show.

In all, Bush and first lady Laura Bush have invited at least 270 people to stay at the White House and at least the same number to overnight at the Camp David retreat since moving to Washington in January 2001, according to lists the White House provided The Associated Press.

**Some guests spent a night in the Lincoln Bedroom**, historic quarters that gained new fame in the Clinton administration amid allegations that Democrats rewarded major donors like Hollywood heavyweights Steven Spielberg and Barbra Streisand with accommodations there.

That scandal and Bush's criticism of it is one of the reasons the White House identifies guests. **In a debate with Vice President Al Gore in October 2000, Bush said: "I believe they've moved that sign, 'The buck stops here,' from the Oval Office desk to 'The buck stops here' on the Lincoln Bedroom. And that's not good for the country."**

Los Angeles attorney Donald Etra stayed at the Bush White House several times and at Camp David once. Etra, a Yale classmate of President Bush, said he and his wife were invited as friends, not because they each gave Bush \$1,000 in 2000.

"Friendship comes first, donations come second," Etra said.

Describing a stay in the Lincoln Bedroom, he said it was almost impossible to sleep. "It is so unbelievably exciting and unbelievable that you are staying in the White House," he said. "One hesitates to put a coffee cup down on the coffee table because there's an original copy of the Emancipation Proclamation under glass."

Bush's overnight guest roster is virtually free of celebrities - pro golfer Ben Crenshaw is the biggest name - but not of campaign supporters.

At least nine of Bush's biggest fund-raisers appear on the latest list of White House overnight guests, covering June 2002 through December 2003, and-or on the Camp David list, which covers last year. They include:

**Mercer Reynolds**, an Ohio financier, former Bush partner in the Texas Rangers baseball team and former ambassador to Switzerland. Reynolds is leading Bush's campaign fund-raising effort. He was a guest at the White House and the Camp David retreat in Maryland's Catoctin Mountains.

**Brad Freeman**, a venture capitalist who is leading Bush's California fund-raising effort, has raised at least \$200,000 for his re-election campaign and is also a major Republican Party fund-raiser. Freeman stayed at the White House.

**\_Roland Betts**, who raised at least \$100,000 for Bush in 2000, was a Bush fraternity brother at Yale and a Texas Rangers partner. Betts stayed at the White House and Camp David.

**\_William DeWitt**, a Bush partner in the oil business and Texas Rangers who has raised at least \$200,000 for Bush's re-election effort, stayed at the White House.

**\_James Francis**, who headed the Bush campaign's 2000 team of \$100,000-and-up volunteer fund-raisers and was a Bush appointee in Texas when Bush was governor. Francis was a White House guest.

**\_Joseph O'Neill**, an oilman and childhood friend who introduced Bush to Laura Bush and raised at least \$100,000 for each of Bush's presidential campaigns, stayed at the White House.

**\_Colorado Gov. Bill Owens** and New York Gov. **George Pataki**, who each raised at least \$200,000 for Bush's re-election campaign, were White House guests.

**\_James Langdon**, who raised at least \$100,000 for Bush, is a Washington attorney specializing in international oil and gas transactions. Langdon, whose clients include the Russian oil company Lukoil, is a member of Bush's foreign intelligence advisory board and served on Bush's 2000 presidential transition team on energy policy.

"Some of these guests are old classmates, some of them have been friends of theirs for many, many years," White House spokeswoman Erin Healy said. "They enjoy the opportunity to spend time with them."

**Langdon, who stayed at Camp David a few weeks before Russian President Vladimir Putin did last September, said Bush's invitations to him and the other fund-raisers differ from the allegations of the Clinton years.**

"Of course I'm a fund-raiser - I support him in every way I can. But my relationship with him and his wife and his family spans more than three decades," said Langdon, who grew up in Texas and was a Bush friend since Bush's early years there. **"I certainly don't need to be rewarded with a trip to Camp David for doing what I'm doing."**

Several Bush relatives visited the White House and Camp David, including former President George H.W. Bush and former first lady Barbara Bush. Visiting world leaders stayed at Camp David, including British Prime Minister Tony Blair and King Abdullah II of Jordan.

Guests do not have to reimburse the government for their stays.