

## At the Inaugural Balls, the First Couple Were the Only Celebrities Who Mattered

By JULIE BOSMAN

WASHINGTON — Moments before the first dance at the first inaugural ball, President Obama emerged onstage Tuesday hand in hand with his wife, Michelle, who glittered in a floor-length ivory one-shoulder gown.

"How good-looking is my wife?" Mr. Obama asked the crowd at the Neighborhood Ball. During the Beyoncé rendition of "At Last," Mr. Obama accidentally stepped on Mrs. Obama's hem, revealing that the new president might be better on the basketball court than on the dance floor.

So began a nearly seven-hour marathon of ball-going for the first couple that was not scheduled to end until 3 a.m.

The balls capped off a seemingly endless day of photographs, speeches, parades and handshakes for the new president and first lady.

Both the Obamas and Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. and his wife, Jill, vowed to attend all 10 official balls, and they began just after 8:30 on a frigid Washington evening. The parties were

scattered across the city, at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center downtown, the Washington Hilton in Dupont Circle, the National Building Museum, the National Guard Armory and Union Station. The Obamas' daughters, Malia and Sasha, did not show up at any of the balls, but their mother told ABC News that they would not go back to school until Thursday.

After the Neighborhood Ball, a \$25-a-head party that was meant to make the evening accessible to just about anyone, the Obamas walked upstairs at the convention center to the Obama Home States Ball, a party for residents of Illinois and Hawaii.

Hours before the Obamas appeared, the Don Cagen Orchestra, a band from Chicago, began warming up with songs from the 1950s and '60s, including "A Change Is Gonna Come."

The Obamas walked onstage after a dramatic introduction by eight uniformed officers, and began dancing while the crowd cheered them on, clapping.