

Book: White House party crasher says she has MS

By EILEEN SULLIVAN (AP)

WASHINGTON — Michaele Salahi, who gained notoriety with her husband by crashing a glitzy White House state dinner, says in a new book that she suffers from multiple sclerosis, a potentially debilitating disease that she says she has kept secret for years.

Salahi says a bad spell the night of the White House dinner caused the couple to leave the event early.

Billed as a tell-all book written with the couple's cooperation, "Cirque Du Salahi" by Diane Dimond offers little new information about the incident last year that sparked a high-profile government criminal investigation and made the couple minor celebrities. The title plays on the name of the Montreal-based Cirque du Soleil, the "Circus of the Sun."

The Associated Press obtained a copy of the book in advance of its sale Wednesday.

Multiple sclerosis, Salahi says, explains her rail-thin physique. She rejects suggestions by others that she suffers from an eating disorder. She is described in the book as eating sugary cereal for Thanksgiving and not eating or drinking even water for long periods of a day.

Weight loss is not a typical symptom of MS, according to the National Multiple Sclerosis Society.

Salahi, now 44 and a central figure on Bravo's reality show "Real Housewives of D.C.," was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis when she was 28, according to the book. Her symptoms include tingling sensations and exhaustion, especially in stressful situations. She says one such spell caused the Salahis to leave early from the White House dinner that the couple continues to insist they were invited to attend.

In the book, both Salahi and her husband, Tareq, describe brief conversations with President Barack Obama that evening.

The Salahis arrived at the White House with a camera crew filming footage for the reality show that aired eight months later. But they were not on any of the guest lists and did not receive the typical engraved invitation to the exclusive event. That the Salahis were able to get into the White House and so close to the president without being on a guest list prompted changes to security policies, the punishment of three Secret Service officers and a criminal investigation that hasn't yet led to charges.

The book's author cites contemporaneous e-mail exchanges about their efforts to get into the event at the last minute. But she also writes critically about other aspects of the Salahis' lives and business dealings. "They may have been downright duplicitous," Dimond writes.

The author found no evidence, for example, to corroborate Salahi's claim that she was a Washington Redskins cheerleader.

"I have to conclude that Michaele Holt Salahi made up the story of having been a Redskins cheerleader ... and once caught in the lie she responded by confronting those who questioned her with more lies," Dimond writes. "It raised the question, What else might she have been less than truthful about?"

Elsewhere in the book, Neal Schon, the lead guitarist for the rock group Journey, would not confirm that he and Salahi once had a relationship that Salahi described as "intimate" and "passionate." On her "Real Housewives" blog, Salahi says she is working on a secret song with Schon. Schon did not respond to a message sent through his Facebook page, but he lists the Salahis among his friends.

The book describes the Salahis as a social-climbing couple with a history of charitable contributions and a "mound of outstanding debt" who have been wrongly accused in the White House dinner incident by the government and the media.

The 255-page book, published by Amazon, goes on sale Wednesday for \$15.99.



FILE - In this Tuesday, Nov. 24, 2009 file photo, Michaele and Tareq Salahi, right, arrive at a State Dinner at the White House in Washington. Salahi, who gained notoriety with her husband by crashing a glitzy White House state dinner, says in a new book that she suffers from multiple sclerosis, a potentially debilitating disease that she says she has kept secret for years. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert, file)