

THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT

Press Information

**"THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT":
FIVE NIGHTS OF AMERICAN HISTORY
FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE WHITE HOUSE**

THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT, the first documentary series ever to tell the stories of all 41 of America's chief executives, will present ten hours of presidential history over five consecutive nights on PBS beginning *Sunday, April 9, 2000, 9-11 PM (ET)*. (Check local listings.) A co-production of Kunhardt Productions, Inc. and Thirteen/WNET New York, **THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT** is presented on PBS by Thirteen/WNET. The sole underwriter is New York Life Insurance Company.

The series is thematically organized. Each hour presents profiles of four presidents who shared an important attribute. Two hours will air each evening, and each evening has its own over-arching theme. Here is a breakdown of the air schedule.

Sunday, April 9: A MATTER OF DESTINY

Program One: "Family Ties"

The Republican front-runner in the current presidential campaign is George W. Bush, the son of former President George Bush and the Democratic leader is Al Gore, scion of an old political family. Even in a democracy, power inevitably passes from generation to generation, and several families have returned to the White House as though born to it. The stories of the four men profiled in this hour — **John Quincy Adams, Benjamin Harrison, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and John F. Kennedy** — reveal both the blessings and the curses of inherited power.

Program Two: "Happenstance"

Nearly one in five American presidents died in office. The vice presidents who succeeded them were often chosen for the ticket less because they were equal to the



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FACT SHEET

THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT, the first documentary series ever to profile all 41 of America's chief executives, is a co-production of Kunhardt Productions, Inc., and Thirteen/WNET New York, and is presented on PBS by Thirteen/WNET. The ten-hour series will air over five consecutive nights, from *Sunday, April 9, through Thursday, April 13, 9-11 PM* (check local listings). The series sole underwriter is New York Life Insurance Company. **THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT** features interviews with President Clinton and former Presidents Ford, Carter and Bush. A remarkable group of public figures has provided the voices for the presidents who served before the advent of audio recording. It includes Generals Colin Powell and H. Norman Schwarzkopf; Senators Bob Dole, Howard Baker, Lloyd Bentsen, John Glenn and Paul Simon; Governors Mario Cuomo and Bill Weld; journalists Walter Cronkite, Tom Wicker and Ben Bradlee; political consultant James Carville; the Reverend Billy Graham; and radio personality Don Imus.

Credits:

THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT

Based on the Book

"The American President"

By

Philip B. Kunhardt, Jr.

Philip B. Kunhardt III

Peter W. Kunhardt

With Commentary By

Richard E. Neustadt

Narrated By

Hugh Sidey

Music By

Michael Starobin

thirteen
WNET NEW YORK



KUNHARDT
PRODUCTIONS

Made possible by

NEW
YORK
LIFE

PRESIDENT KENNEDY

embodiment of Am. pres. ideals
+ inspiration for Clinton

Public Papers of the Presidents
Public Papers of the Presidents
February 16, 2000

US. begin of
this future

→ usual rhetoric on
economy?

This month when we celebrated the longest economic expansion in history, I did a little looking into, and thinking about, what was the longest economic expansion until this one. You know when it was? Nineteen sixty-one to 1968. Now, I remember what that was like. I remember in the beginning how full of hope we were when **President Kennedy** was elected. I remember when **President Kennedy** was assassinated, how heartbroken we were, but how we rallied as a country behind President Johnson.

usual rhetorical
tag

All these people that look back at the sixties and say American cynicism started when **President Kennedy** was assassinated are just wrong. That's not true. This country was heartbroken, but we stood up together, and we joined hands. And Lyndon Johnson provided great leadership, and he pulled us together. So in 1964, I'm graduating from high school into an America that was the nearest like this America: we had low unemployment, low inflation, high growth. And everybody thought as difficult as the civil rights problems were, they were going to be resolved in a peaceable manner, with this wizard in the White House and the votes in Congress, to lawfully give African-Americans what they were constitutionally entitled to. And all the while we would win the cold war against communism, and we would create the greatest society America had ever known. That's what I believed the night I graduated from high school.

ever expanding sense of the possible → an incompleteness to

Public Papers of the Presidents
Public Papers of the Presidents
July 24, 1998

this nation → never meant
to be complete

As some of you may know, a few days ago we had a reunion here at the White House for our 35th anniversary of our Boys Nation summer, and "Nightline" ran 2 nights on our reunion. I asked your president if he'd seen either one of them; he said he saw the first one, the second one he was here on duty. But I had an opportunity to meet with about half the men who were with me 35 years ago, and we were reminiscing. It was exactly 35 years ago on this day, July 24, 1963, that **President Kennedy** spoke to us right here in the Rose Garden about our future. He made us believe that together we could change the world. I still believe that, and I think it is no less true for your generation. Indeed, I believe you will live in the time of greatest possibility in all human history.

Today I want to talk with you a little bit about what we have to do as a country to make the most of those possibilities, specifically about what we have to do to strengthen our education system.

When I was here, **President Kennedy** complimented us for supporting civil rights legislation which the Nation's Governors had declined to do. I was very proud of that because two delegates from Louisiana and I and one from Mississippi were four Southerners who broke from the pack and ensured that the legislation would pass. But I have to say that, looking back over the years,

I thought I would tell you this, for those of you who don't know, since **President Kennedy** once said at a dinner of Nobel laureates that it was the most distinguished array of brainpower ever gathered in the White House since Thomas Jefferson dined there alone. [Laughter] James Hoban defeated Thomas Jefferson submitted anonymously a design for the White House, and the people making the decision, basically George Washington and a few of his friends, concluded that Hoban was superior to Jefferson. [Laughter]

THOMAS JEFFERSON/WHITE HOUSE

Public Papers of the Presidents
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July 28, 1999

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Public Papers of the Presidents
Public Papers of the Presidents
March 9, 2000

The President. Thank you. Well, first of all, welcome to the White House. Welcome to this wonderful East Room, where Thomas Jefferson and Meriwether Lewis planned the Lewis and Clark expedition to explore parts of America no one had ever seen, to try to find an ocean that no one thought could be reached by land. In a way, we are here on an even grander expedition, to try to find a place in the human heart no one has ever seen, that many believe we cannot reach in this life.

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Thomas Jefferson said, "The ground of liberty must be gained by inches, for it takes time to persuade men to do even what is in their own interest."

connect w/ Messiaen & Lewis & Clark →

Public Papers of the Presidents

Public Papers of the Presidents

February 24, 1997

As the Secretary said, we have always expanded education. He began with Abraham Lincoln, and we might have begun with **Thomas Jefferson**, who advocated even as he advocated buying Louisiana -- for which I'm very grateful; otherwise I wouldn't be President -- [laughter] -- and America becoming a continental nation, that we should educate all of our children. **Thomas Jefferson** even advocated the education of every single child, boy or girl, of slave families in America. And we know from the beginning that it was the education of our leaders that gave them the vision to chart the course which has brought us to this day.

→ digital divide/access

good long

Public Papers of the Presidents

Public Papers of the Presidents

July 6, 1995

Thomas Jefferson said he had no fear of the most extreme views in America being expressed with the greatest passion as long as reason had a chance -- as long as reason had a chance. Citizens have to give reason a chance.

President
What do the political leaders have to do? I would argue four things: Number one, we need more conversation and less combat; number two, when we differ we ought to offer an alternative; number three, we ought to look relentlessly at the long-term and remind the American people that the problems we have developed over a long period years; and number four, we shouldn't just berate the worst in America, we ought to spend more time celebrating the best.

Those are four things that I think I should do, and I think every other leader in this country ought to do. Conversation, not combat is what I tried to do with the Speaker in New Hampshire, and I want to do more of it with others. I'm willing if they are. I think it would be good for America.

→ conciliatory

Public Papers of the Presidents

Public Papers of the Presidents

October 12, 1999

This is a fitting thing for us to do in the **White House**, because innovations in communication and technology are a very important part of the history of this old place. In 1858 the first transatlantic telegraph transmission was received here in a message that Queen Victoria sent to

talk about New Markets tax briefly? ability to make WH more accessible to all Americans ^{rough and peer}
President Buchanan. Later, the first telephone in Washington, DC, was located in a room upstairs, and we now have a replica of that telephone in the same room upstairs. The first mobile phone call to the Moon was made here by President Nixon 30 years ago. Even these Millennium Evenings have made their own history. This is where we held the first-ever cybercast at the White House.

Public Papers of the Presidents
Public Papers of the Presidents
July 7, 1995

no matter what economic racial or religious category they belong.

1500 words? I want to say, too, that we thought that we ought to have this ceremony in the East Room. This has always been the people's room. In the 19th century, it used to get so crowded at receptions that one of the windows over here was turned into a door so people could get out if they couldn't bear the crowds anymore. There are so many here today, perhaps we should have done it again. But we thought the air-conditioning made it advisable for us to all stay put.

Many of you know that it was in this room that Abigail Adams used to dry the family laundry when the room was nothing more than a brick shell. You may not know that the great explorer Meriwether Lewis set up camp here, surrounded by canvas tarps, books, and hunting rifles in the day when he was Thomas Jefferson's secretary. John Quincy Adams frequently would come here to watch the Sun rise after he finished his early morning swim in the Potomac. That also is something we're considering taking up if the heat wave doesn't break.

anecdotes should we come up w/ more quirky details?

The portraits that we add here today celebrate another chapter to our rich history and particularly to the rich history of the East Room where they will remain for a few days before they are properly hung. I managed to get a glimpse of these portraits, and I must admit that I think the artist did a wonderful job, and we're all in his debt. But I also want to say, President Bush, if I look half as good as you do when I leave office, I'll be a happy man. [Laughter]

I want to again compliment Herbert Abrams, the artist. He also painted the portrait of President Carter. So once again, President Bush has set another outstanding example of bipartisanship.

[These portraits, as has already been said, will be seen by millions of Americans who visit here, reminding them of what these two great Americans stood for and for what they have done to strengthen our country. The portraits in the White House are more than likenesses. They tell the story of the promise of one American life and, in so doing, the promise of all American life. They offer a lesson, an example, a challenge for every American to live up to the responsibilities of citizenship.]

↓
East Room
key

Public Papers of the Presidents
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July 28, 1999

maybe framework for Clinton anecdotes about Kennedy and Jefferson? great language

here in
This country has been around a long time because we have remained faithful to our ideals, but forever young and open to change. I don't want to conduct a **tour of the White House** today, but the old house was finished in 1800. So, on our millennial year, we will celebrate the 200th birthday of the White House. The painting of George Washington to my left, to your right, was painted by Gilbert Stuart in 1797 and purchased for the then enormous sum of \$ 500, for the White House. It is priceless today.

But it's worth remembering how important it is to keep democracy alive, that in 1814, when we were in the last throes of the War of 1812 and the British were coming up the Potomac, the President of the United States, James Madison -- who was the last President to be the active Commander in Chief for the Armed Forces, and so was up in Maryland, where he mistakenly thought the British would be -- at the head of an army, sent word back to his wife, Dolley, who was preparing this vast banquet -- the White House was full of food; this room was full of food -- that the British were on the way and she should get out, but no matter what, she had to take the picture of George Washington.

So Dolley Madison cut that picture out of its frame, rolled it up, and got out of the White House. The British arrived to find the empty frame, ate the food, and burned the house. [Laughter] But we rebuilt the house, and the picture still lives. And every time I see that picture, I think about it.

It was in this room that Thomas Jefferson met with his secretary, Merriwether Lewis, to plan the Lewis and Clark expedition -- right where you're all sitting. The place was covered with bearskins and ancient maps, and they were -- President Jefferson was in love with the geography and science, and he saw this whole thing as not only a geographical expedition, but he thought that all kinds of scientific information would be gathered along the way. So a lot of very important things have happened where you are sitting today that remind us that America is a place with great opportunities and great responsibilities.

THE PRESIDENCY

Public Papers of the Presidents

Public Papers of the Presidents

April 2, 1998

Well, let me say, I've done my best to do what every President who has commented on this, from George Washington forward, has said the President should do, which is that for the period of your service, insofar as possible, you should cease to be an individual citizen and spend all your time and energy on the country. And that's what I've tried to do. And I've done my best at it, and the results have been satisfactory, I think, for the American people. And that's what I intend to continue to do. Others should evaluate that question, but I need to keep working on the people's business, and that's what I intend to do.

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I feel like the luckiest person alive; that at this moment in history, I was fortunate enough to be given a chance to **serve as President** and to focus the attention of the Nation on the future, on some old-fashioned ideas: everybody counts, everybody ought to have a chance, everybody's got a role to play, we all do better when we help each other.

The work I have done to build one America for a new century was a joy every day. Even on the darkest days, the fact that I had this job to do for you and for our children and our children's children made this a joy.

Public Papers of the Presidents
Public Papers of the Presidents
January 26, 2000

I think that history will be very much -- that people who do serious histories of this administration will be amazed at the amount of energy and effort that went into the wide variety of areas that we worked in. And I think that it will show that in virtually every area we had progress, from helping to reduce poverty to improving the plight of our children, to creating an environment with the reform of telecommunications, the reform of banking, and getting rid of the deficit and major investments in science and technology, to this exploding new economy.

I think that it will show that we helped America to make this major transition into a new economy and an era of globalization.

Public Papers of the Presidents
Public Papers of the Presidents
August 4, 1998

I'm very grateful to have had the chance to **serve as President** at a time of remarkable change and to try to make sure that this period of change works for all Americans and that, when we get to the 21st century, the American dream is alive and well for everybody who is responsible enough to work for it, that our country is strong and visionary enough to continue to lead the world toward prosperity and peace and freedom, and that we can do that because we have enough sense to come together, across all the lines that divide us, into one America. That is what I have worked for.

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American pencils

PHOTOCOPY
REPRODUCTION



Today is Friday, April seventh, the 98th day of 2000.
There are 268 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April seventh, 1927, an audience in New York saw an image of Commerce Secretary Herbert Hoover in the first successful long-distance demonstration of television.



On this date:

In 1862, Union forces led by **General Ulysses S. Grant** defeated the Confederates at the Battle of Shiloh in Tennessee.

In 1939, Italy invaded Albania. (Less than a week later, Italy annexed Albania.)

In 1945, during World War Two, American planes intercepted a Japanese fleet that was headed for Okinawa on a suicide mission.

In 1947, auto pioneer Henry Ford died in Dearborn, Michigan, at age 83.

In 1948, the World Health Organization was founded.

In 1949, the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical "South Pacific" opened on Broadway.

In 1953, the UN General Assembly elected Dag Hammarskjold of Sweden to be secretary-general.

In 1957, the last of New York's electric trolleys completed its final run from Queens to Manhattan.

In 1969, the Supreme Court unanimously struck down laws prohibiting private possession of obscene material.

In 1994, civil war erupted in Rwanda, a day after a mysterious plane crash claimed the lives of the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi; in the months that followed, hundreds of thousands of minority Tutsi and Hutu intellectuals were slaughtered.

Ten years ago: Former national security adviser John M. Poindexter was convicted of five counts at his Iran-Contra trial (however, a federal appeals court later reversed the convictions). A display of Robert Mapplethorpe photographs opened at Cincinnati's Contemporary Arts Center, the same day the center and its director were indicted on obscenity charges (both were acquitted). An arson fire aboard a ferry en route from Norway to Denmark killed 158 people.

Five years ago: President Clinton threatened to veto a lengthy list of

Thought for Today:

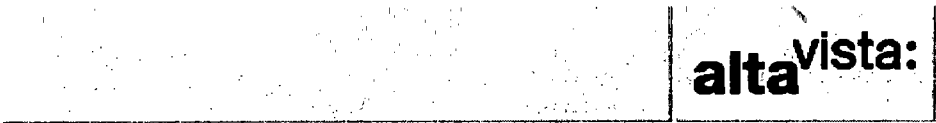
"It isn't enough to talk about peace. One must believe in it. And it isn't enough to believe in it. One must work at it."

-- Eleanor Roosevelt,
American first lady
(1884-1962).

bills passed by the Republican-controlled House if they were not modified in the Senate. In a prime-time television address, House Speaker Newt Gingrich declared the GOP "Contract with America" was only a beginning.

One year ago: Yugoslav authorities sealed off Kosovo's main border crossings, preventing ethnic Albanians from leaving as the wave of refugees approached the half-million mark.

Today's Birthdays: Actor R.G. Armstrong is 83. Sitar player Ravi Shankar is 80. Actor James Garner is 72. Country singer Cal Smith is 68. Actor Wayne Rogers is 67. Actor Ian Richardson is 66. Media commentator Hodding Carter the Third is 65. Country singer Bobby Bare is 65. Rhythm-and-blues singer Charlie Thomas (The Drifters) is 63. Jazz musician Freddie Hubbard is 62. The mayor of Oakland, California, Jerry Brown, is 62. Movie director Francis Ford Coppola is 61. Television personality David Frost is 61. Rock musician Bill Kreutzmann is 54. Singer Patricia Bennett (The Chiffons) is 53. Singer John Oates is 51. Singer Janis Ian is 49. Country musician John Dittrich is 49. Rock musician Bruce Gary is 48. Actor Jackie Chan is 46. Football Hall-of-Famer Tony Dorsett is 46. Actor Russell Crowe is 36. Rhythm-and-blues singer Mark Kibble (Take 6) is 36. Pop singer Victoria "Posh Spice" Aadams Beckham (The Spice Girls) is 25.



TODAY IN HISTORY ARCHIVES: [JAN - JUN](#) | [JULY - DEC](#)

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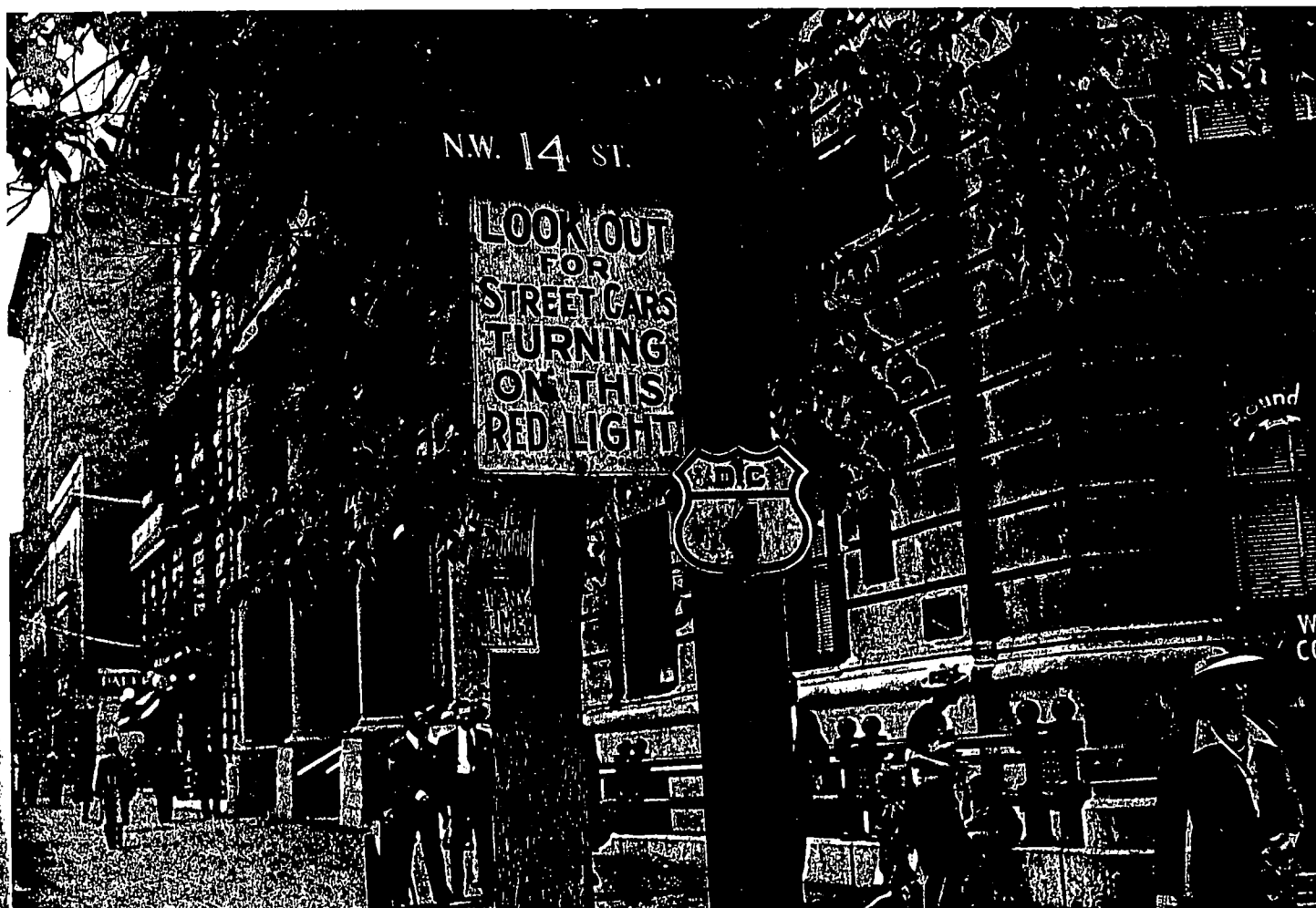
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PREFACE

With its clutter of signs and ordinary lampposts, it looks like streets all across the country, but just down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C., is the most important address in the world. In a monumental house conceived and built by George Washington, who almost lived to see it finished, every president since has carried his own burden through its halls, has stood in awe of the gigantic East Room, has thrilled to its great pillars and stately façades, has spent sleepless nights tossing in its beds. The grand house, like the presidency itself, has both remained very much a constant and changed tremendously over the two centuries since John Adams made the mansion his own on November 1, 1800, with the very first night's sleep of a chief executive.

Thirteen years earlier, at the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, the idea for the presidency was born. On June 1, 1787, James Wilson of Pennsylvania moved that

the executive of the United States consist of a single individual. James Madison, taking notes, recorded the impact of the proposal, which thrust the roomful of buzzing delegates into a sudden and total silence. All knew it was a moment of fateful significance. Wilson believed that a single president could give energy and dispatch to the office, allowing for decisiveness during critical moments in history. But for others the idea seemed fraught with danger, though no one wanted to insult the man sitting in their midst who would almost certainly be named to the job should such an office be created—General George Washington. After “a considerable pause,” in Madison’s words, Edmund Randolph of Virginia spoke out on behalf of those opposed, calling a solitary executive “the foetus of monarchy,” and urging that the office be shared by an executive committee. And so Wilson’s proposal was debated on that first Friday in June, and after



days of heated argument and changing opinions, the fateful motion carried. Ever since, the presidency, as one commentator has put it, has been "at the mercy of the accident of personality."

It is the extraordinary procession of these "accidents of personality" that inspired this family team to undertake an exhilarating study of the presidency, which includes not only this book but also a ten-hour PBS documentary series.

In some ways, the presidency is the most exclusive of clubs—by the turn of the twentieth century, just forty-one members, all men, all white, and all Christian. Closer inspection, however, reveals a less static society, one moving inexorably toward greater inclusion. Andrew Jackson was the first to break open the genteel, highly educated ranks represented by the first six presidents. A self-made man hailing from the frontier in western Tennessee, Jackson opened up whole new possibilities in what kind of American could reach the White House. He was followed by a host of figures from equally unlikely backgrounds—a longtime tailor (Andrew Johnson), a fitful tanner (Ulysses S. Grant), a one-time canal boy (James Garfield), and a former rail-splitter (Abraham Lincoln). And though lawyers and career politicians have predominated in the high office, twentieth-century Americans elected a professor (Wilson), a newspaperman (Harding), an engineer (Hoover), and a movie star (Reagan). John F. Kennedy was the first Roman Catholic to reach the White House. Inevitably, the country will elect a woman as president.

As anyone who has toured the White House knows—and 1.2 million Americans do so each year—the mansion's walls prominently display important portraits of past presidents. It was not always so. Though the famous full-length painting of George Washington by Gilbert Stuart has been a feature of the executive mansion since 1800, there was little appetite for any others until the middle of the nineteenth century. It was Andrew Johnson's daughter, Martha, who discovered, while rummaging in the White House attic, a set of six presidential portraits commissioned in the 1850s but then forgotten. Hanging them in the great transverse hall of the state floor of the White House, she opened what was in essence the first presidential portrait gallery in the White House. It was immensely popular and soon was moved into the East Room. Under President Hayes, the gallery was brought up to date by the acquisition of eleven

new paintings, and the collection keeps growing. Each president since has been surrounded by these portraits. They look down upon his comings and goings as a vivid remainder of the relatively few others who have shared his unique station. Their power is symbolic as well as historical. Ronald Reagan, at the opening of his administration in 1980, ordered the portrait of his hero Calvin Coolidge moved onto a prominent wall in the Cabinet Room. George Bush said he did his best thinking during the Gulf War while sitting in the presence of the portrait of Abraham Lincoln. And Richard Nixon, during the depths of the Watergate crisis, used to wander through the White House halls at night talking to the portraits as if to living presences. This book, too, is a presidential portrait gallery, made up not only of oil paintings and of hundreds of rare photographs, but also of words—both ours and of each of the presidents—that open up vistas onto those living presences.

A significant portion of our research time went into searching out the original words of the presidents, not only those existing in widely available published sources, but also those only to be found in manuscript form. And not only the distinguished public utterances, but the little-known, the intensely private, and the humanly revealing, as well as those words that shed light on our own thematic approaches. Chosen out of thousands upon thousands of examples, these words are sprinkled liberally throughout our text, as well as being gathered inside special boxes in each chapter labeled "In His Own Words."

The story of the presidency is, at least in part, a story of human personality under pressure. The administration of George Washington is not fully intelligible without reference to his consuming desire for integrity and to be above politics. John Adams is best illumined by an inspection of his own unique makeup—his learnedness, his irascibility, and most of all his stubborn independence. Again and again a president's personality ends up helping shape his executive performance. Jefferson's expansiveness, Madison's caution, Jackson's ferociousness, Buchanan's timidity, FDR's self-confidence all deeply affected the evolution of the high office. And so questions of character are not only relevant, they are essential. Was a president decisive or indecisive? Rash or thoughtful? Tough-skinned or too sensitive to criticism? Kindly or coldhearted? Did he have a vision for the country he wanted to pursue, or did he become lost in the



A turn-of-the-century view of the White House's north entrance

minutiae of the everyday tasks of the office? Was he proficient in working with others and in enlisting political allies, or was he a loner who withdrew and tried to do everything himself? Was he expansive or petty? Was he honest or dishonest? Did he have a basic trust in the American people or a basic distrust? These questions and others help bring focus to the ways in which presidents have affected the history of the nation.

Our most essential early decision as this project took shape was to treat the presidents thematically, rather than chronologically. Our senior historical consultant, David Herbert Donald, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for biography,

early on put us in touch with Stephen Skowronek, a political scientist at Yale University who specializes in the history of the presidency. His groundbreaking book *The Politics Presidents Make* compares presidents from different eras who shared common dilemmas and who inhabited what he has called similar "political time." Especially qualified to analyze our thematic approach, Skowronek helped us arrange our groupings, following our mandate that each chapter include an early president, two from the middle years, and a modern one who was still alive and could be interviewed today, or at least had lived in the era of moving pictures and recorded sound. With some slight tinkering

over the next four years, these categories became the intellectual framework for this book. Skowronek has served as our chief academic consultant, and his Foreword, which explains the importance of looking at the presidents trans-historically, appears on pages *xii* and *xiii*.

Another important alliance that was formed as the project unfolded was with the Harvard scholar Richard E. Neustadt, who has been called by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "our most brilliant commentator on the presidency." Neustadt's specialty is analyzing what makes effective presidential leadership; his book *Presidential Power* has been dubbed "an operational Bible for presidents." Our decision to make Dick the sole on-camera commentator for the PBS television series that accompanies this book ended up deeply shaping not only the series but the book as well. He has contributed his own introduction that begins on page *xiv*.

For narrator of the television series, we brought on Hugh Sidey, who has been *Time* magazine's special correspondent on the presidency for four decades. Sidey conducted exclusive interviews for this project with Presidents Carter, Ford, Bush, and Clinton, and these interviews serve as the basis for the chapters on these four presidents. Practically a member of the White House himself, as well as a student of it, Sidey brings a unique perspective to the workings of the Oval Office and the eight presidents he has intimately known (see page *xi*).

The New York Life Insurance Company, whose board of trustees has included two presidents—Calvin Coolidge and Herbert Hoover—has been the sole sponsor of the television project. Without their enormous support, this venture would not have been undertaken. For five years, as the project has been developed and a nationwide school involvement has materialized around the enterprise, we have worked together as true partners. New York Life is a company ideally suited to present this subject to the nation.

The ten chapters in this book are presented as five pairs of opposites. Those presidents grouped in Chapter 1, "The Heroic Posture," were all national heroes before they ever were candidates. In contrast are the five men in Chapter 2 we have labeled "Compromise Choices"—politicians chosen in many cases for who they were not, rather than for who they were. The "Professional Politicians" grouped in Chapter 3 are contrasted with those political loners of "Independent Cast of Mind" in Chapter 4. Those profiled

in "Family Ties" all seemed born for the high office, while those in "Happenstance" reached the presidency only because of accident and national tragedy. Those grouped in "The American Way" each possessed a burning vision for their country, while those juxtaposed in "The World Stage" made their contributions principally in foreign affairs. And finally, those presidents brought together in Chapter 9—all of whom deliberately stretched the power of the office—are in contrast to the presidents grouped in Chapter 10, who were constrained, for better or worse, by the balanced powers of our overall government.

As we crisscross the boundaries between presidential successes and failures, between greatness and mediocrity, these categories define our focus and shape our text. By taking stock of all the presidents, both those familiar and unfamiliar, and by juxtaposing modern presidents with earlier incumbents, we hope to have given coherence to the sprawling presidential experience. Indeed, the president we treat first within each of these ten chapters represents an archetype that reemerges later in presidents eerily reminiscent of the original. Theodore Roosevelt appears almost like a new Andrew Jackson; William Howard Taft seems in some ways like a resurgence of James Madison; Jimmy Carter closely resembles John Adams and also Rutherford B. Hayes; LBJ echoes Van Buren and also Abraham Lincoln.

It is our hope that our efforts will be of assistance to the American voter. Since our goal has been to see the presidency afresh and to think about its incumbents in new ways, so, too, the process of selection, we believe, can be invigorated by many of these same insights. The search for personal excellence has many pitfalls and blind alleys; for a voter to be able to spot some of them and hold them up to the light of history is citizenship of a high order.

Over the past thirty years, historians have rightly turned away from the old bias of studying history primarily through the stories of its "great white men." And yet the American presidents continue to fascinate. The president is the only elected officer representing the entire nation, and thus has a special obligation to the American people. As has been made clear in the closing years of the twentieth century, the American people still care about the presidency. They believe in it, and rightly insist that it belongs to them.



Hugh Sidey records the narration for the companion PBS documentary series "The American President." Below, he reflects on more than four decades covering the White House for *Time* magazine, including the presidencies of Truman, Eisenhower and the eight chief executives pictured with him to the right.

A Personal Journey by Hugh Sidey

John Kennedy sat forward to listen closely to his space experts. They told him it would cost \$40 billion (a huge sum then) and take ten years, and they could not guarantee that the United States would beat the Soviet Union to the moon. Kennedy grimaced, ran his fingers through his hair, then leaned back in his chair in the Cabinet Room. He wanted Americans on the moon—and first. "I want some answers," he told the small group of aides. "Ask the janitor over there if you have to. But I want to know how and when we can get to the moon."

I thought to myself, as I watched and listened to this restless young man of privilege and daring on that April evening in 1961, that with a few words he had launched the nation on a great adventure. And it must have been the same with the visionary Thomas Jefferson, who doubled the size of the United States with the Louisiana Purchase; and the prairie lawyer Abraham Lincoln, who marshaled the most powerful army the world had known to abolish slavery; and Theodore Roosevelt, who sent his engineers to build the Panama Canal. With vision and a free people behind them, these presidents—and the others—profoundly transformed civilization. In our time there is no more effective and powerful political office on the face of the earth.

Every one of the forty-one men who have been president has left his mark, some more positive than others. "No president wants to fail," Lyndon Johnson once protested when he was criticized about the Vietnam War. "You do the best you know how." In the midst of that tragic conflict he had won battles for better education and health care. And Richard Nixon, who would be driven from office by the Watergate scandal, had journeyed triumphantly through China, offering American friendship for the first time after twenty-five years of Chinese isolation.

The presidency, like democracy, is not an easy journey. "I'm going to give the job to Nixon," JFK once grumped when things were going badly. He knew better. He gloried in "the great chess game," as he called it. That is why so many people now fight for the right to be president. I've ridden along on this historic caravan for more than forty years now. There is no more fascinating and thrilling—and often entertaining—drama that we can witness.

It is my great hope that this book and the public television series it accompanies will allow every reader and viewer to hear the voices and the bugle calls and the church bells, and then feel the excitement of these men calling their nation to the most magnificent efforts in war and peace that humankind has ever known.



With Kennedy



With Johnson



With Nixon



With Ford



With Carter



With Reagan



With Bush



With Clinton

FOREWORD

by Stephen Skowronek
Yale University

The *American President* invites readers to rethink presidential history and reconsider the men who have held America's top leadership position. The book draws us into the history with an extraordinary collection of photographic and pictorial images, the most comprehensive visual accounting of the principal characters and their environs ever assembled in a single volume. But I would like to draw particular attention to the narrative supported by this artwork. These stunning images are arrayed in the service of an innovative approach to the subject matter. The arrangement and presentation of the material allow us to see familiar figures afresh and to gain new insight into this most enigmatic of institutions.

Familiar as it is, the American presidency has never been easy to understand. The institution has a protean character that defies fixed descriptions and settled explanations. At one moment, it disappoints; at the next, it astonishes. Its history is riddled with eminence and embarrassment, proficiency and paralysis. As each incumbent brings something different to the job, each administration reveals some feature of the position scarcely intimated in the experience of his immediate predecessors.

Writing about an office so mutable and unpredictable is one of the great challenges of political analysis, and no single response has proved entirely satisfactory. But if the presidency does not admit of a definitive history, it does encourage experimentation with different perspectives that might capture one or another of its many aspects. Consider the two most prominently displayed in the literature.

The first approach, "the men and their times," has long been the perspective of choice among biographers and historians. Studies of this sort show us the unique ways in which personality and circumstance interact within the presidential office to determine the fate of particular administrations. Chronological histories of the presidents written from this point of view indicate as well how rare it is for the critical elements to combine in just the right way. The great success stories—George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt—are few and far between, and they stand out starkly against the long progression of lesser lights.

For those attuned to the frustrations and shortfalls of recent incumbents, these chronological histories are especially instructive. They suggest that our contemporary experience is very much the normal state of affairs in American

government. The natural inclination to identify the travails of the sitting president with problems in the governmental system itself is tempered by this perspective on the past, as is the yearning for a leader who will "make the system work." And yet, important as it is to understand the frustration of presidents as part and parcel of the way our system works, this insight will take us only so far. Indeed, for anyone interested in general attributes of the presidential office, a chronological analysis of the struggles of individual characters in particular contexts will prove quite limited. Even those paragons who reached the commanding heights of authority and accomplishment appear fixed in place by this perspective, limited in what they can teach others by the idiosyncrasies of personality and circumstance.

In recent years, an alternative perspective has taken hold that directs our attention more specifically to the institutional development of the presidential office. Studies written from this point of view remind us that though each of our presidents has held the same constitutional position, the governing norms and practical operations of that office have changed over time in rather dramatic ways. Instead of discussing presidential history administration by administration, works on the development of the office typically consider several administrations together in broadly defined eras: the early national period of the founding generation of presidents, the "party period" of the nineteenth-century presidency, and the period of the "modern presidency," ushered in by the New Deal and World War II. Within each of these periods we see a group of presidents who shared similar political resources, technological capacities, and institutional supports, and the coherence of the office can be discerned in reference to common assumptions and expectations about the exercise of power. From this perspective, the key distinctions to be drawn among presidents are not between the "greats" and the lesser lights but between those of one period and the next, as each group is seen to inhabit a very different institution.

This more schematic rendering of presidential history facilitates generalizations about the office, but note that these are generalizations of a particular kind. While similarities among presidents within each period are fairly easy to spot, similarities among presidents in different periods tend to get filtered out. Indeed, when the "modern presidency" is understood as an institution different in kind from all prior

forms, and the modern presidents are seen as a coherent group standing apart from the rest, most of presidential history simply loses its relevance. Nearly three-quarters of American presidents predate the modern period, but with the possible exception of the experiences of a handful of historic "greats," the early record would seem to be relegated by this perspective to mere historical interest. The outstanding question is, What can incumbents like Benjamin Harrison or Zachary Taylor possibly tell us about the presidential office as it appears in our own day?

The American President answers this question by establishing a third vantage point from which to view the history of the office. Though the book draws freely on insights made available through more conventional frames of reference, it experiments with a very different temporal arrangement of the material. It does not proceed chronologically though the succession of incumbents, nor does it take up the usual periods of institutional development each in its turn. Instead, the presentation reaches across the standard demarcations of the subject, joining together early and modern presidents around general themes that transcend the particulars of time and place. Each chapter ranges through the whole of presidential history, calling attention to a particular scattering of incumbents that captures something emblematic of the American experience with this office. In this way, the reader gains a sense of those aspects and attitudes of incumbency that constitute the presidency's most enduring qualities.

The thought that breaking up presidential history in this disjointed, out-of-phase fashion might better convey an overarching sense of the whole is but the first of many intriguing notions contained in *The American President*. In its ten thematic sweeps through time, the book is continually juxtaposing presidencies in unexpected ways and shaking up familiar images as it does so. Jimmy Carter's fiercely "independent cast of mind" has always appeared a bit peculiar among the modern presidents, and yet his apparent disdain for professional politicians and his inclination to go it alone politically have deep historical resonance. When Carter's example is joined to those of John Adams, Zachary Taylor, and Rutherford Hayes, the independent stance appears as one of the presidency's most persistent poses. Similarly, the fabled grouping of "greats" is fruitfully broken up here in the service of illuminating less well attended asso-

ciations. George Washington is placed alongside Ulysses S. Grant in a chapter examining the vicissitudes of "the heroic posture." Abraham Lincoln is considered in conjunction with Lyndon Johnson in an exploration of "professional politicians" whose long dedication to their peculiar vocation landed them in America's highest office. Franklin Roosevelt makes his appearance next to Benjamin Harrison to illustrate the influence of "family ties" on presidential history.

To make this organizing principle work, special care had to be taken in crafting the exposition. If, in elaborating these themes, the book had run roughshod over the forty-one different personalities who have held the office, or if it had failed to take into account institutional developments that have transformed that office over time, the end product would be more likely to confuse than enlighten. Several features of the presentation stand out as especially effective in meeting this challenge. The first is that each of the transhistorical themes is rendered through a set of individual presidential vignettes. This means that the office never loses its human face and that critical institutional developments within it are always kept in view. More striking still is the extent to which the presentation allows the presidents to speak for themselves, expressing the major themes in their own words. Breathing life into the framework of the book, this technique serves to make the history accessible even to those who might not have a detailed prior knowledge of it.

Finally, there is the pictorial and photographic support that instantly contextualizes each story and provides a visual accounting of the passage of time. This skillful integration of structure, narrative, and imagery provides a powerful synthesis and makes an important contribution to our understanding of the American presidency. But of course *The American President* is by no means an exhaustive account of the subject. Perhaps the most attractive feature of this book is that in opening up presidential history to an alternative way of thinking, it prompts readers to experiment with its method for themselves. Reshuffling the pieces on our own, we may discover other, as yet hidden connections among the old stories. I can think of no better way to keep this venerable history vital.

INTRODUCTION

by Richard E. Neustadt
Harvard University

As Edward Corwin wrote some sixty years ago, the presidency of the United States has been an office "of uncertain content." So it was in 1787, when the Constitution was drafted, and so it remains today.

This uncertainty is due in part to the spare yet general language of the drafting of the Constitution, which has been subject to reinterpretation in successive generations. For the first forty years, to take just one example, the presidential veto over legislation was thought to apply only to bills affecting presidential powers. Another source of uncertainty as to the office of our chief executive is the uncomfortable fact that most of the presidential powers are shared—Constitutionally and practically—with other institutions independent of a president's command. In that respect, the presidency is weaker than it first appears or than its numerous, importunate constituencies expect. And a third source of uncertainty is the office's relatively stronger role in foreign affairs than domestic affairs—a strength, however, that depends on events abroad, which a president, again, for the most part cannot control.

Because the content of the presidency is uncertain, the person of the president takes on added importance. The manner in which the individual brings his (someday her) mind and energies to bear on the events that frame his time is crucial to the way the office is conceived and executed in that time. The incumbent's own experience, enthusiasms, ideas, interests, prejudices, working style, and temperament will markedly affect what happens in the office and what comes out of it.

The times, of course, can limit or strengthen a president and often do, but he, in turn, makes use of them—or doesn't.

That is why what follows in this book and in the television series it accompanies is oriented to the human histories of the forty-one individuals who so far have occupied the office. Were the institution cut-and-dried, required to perform in the same fashion all the time, those histories would be both less important than they are and less revealing of the presidency in our political system. But the institution is what Corwin said it was.

The uncertainty that dogs the office, heightening the effect of individuals in it, derives most basically from the deliberate competition between president and Congress envisaged in the terms of the Constitution. For example, the

"executive power"—which is never defined—is vested in the president, whose duty also is to "take care that the laws be faithfully executed." But it is Congress that creates executive departments, decides their jurisdictions, spells out their programmatic duties, adds the funds to perform those duties, and by hallowed practice investigates the performance. So it becomes clear that Congress has "executive" powers too.

Or consider this: The president is commander-in-chief of the armed forces, and since Thomas Jefferson's time has sometimes sent them into battle overseas on his own motion. But only Congress has the constitutional right to declare war, and Congress, every two years, sets the size and composition of those forces. Also, the president sends and receives ambassadors, a duty construed from the start to put him in charge of foreign relations. But those he sends must be confirmed by action of the Senate. Should they negotiate a treaty and he sign it, the Senate has to consent before it takes effect. Should he wish to send money abroad, Congress must first appropriate it; should he send troops, Congress must agree to pay, as it also must with weapons and munitions. Regarding troops, he has to state his reasons; according to the law (though never yet in practice), Congress can remove them after sixty days, rejecting his rationale. Only if he drops atomic bombs does Congress have no comeback—save impeachment. But every president since Truman has learned, in awe, from his experience that nuclear weapons are for show, not use.

Or consider this: While Congress is the legislature in our system, the president, in Dwight Eisenhower's phrase, is also "part of the legislative process," not only wielding his veto (which the House of Representatives and Senate both, by a two-thirds vote, can override), but also having the duty to recommend "such measures as he judge necessary and expedient."

These are what we conventionally call "checks and balances" in our government. There are others as well, including the sovereign rights of states within their constitutional limits, which the courts can amend, from time to time, by interpretation, but not abolish altogether. In a comparable category are the rights of citizens, and by extension those of the private sector in our economy, not least the press. And very specifically, in another example of checks and balances, senators and members of the House are forbidden to hold executive appointments simultaneously; there cannot be

A young Richard Neustadt working as an adviser to Harry Truman.



congressional cabinets at the president's end of Pennsylvania Avenue.

Most of these checks and balances derive directly, though not avowedly, from British experience, our founding fathers having all been former British subjects. For example, the check that forbids members of Congress from simultaneously holding executive appointments keeps American presidents from doing what King George III was famous for, his so-called "corruption" of Parliament—building majorities with rewards in the form of appointments to administrative posts.

Moreover, president and Congress are competitive because both represent the American people, and so both can claim to represent the source of sovereignty in popular government. But they do so in different ways, for different terms, as they are nominated and elected by different constituencies. Only the president (and, of course, his running mate) is nominated in primary elections or state conventions all across the country and then chosen by popular vote in general elections held state by state on the same day. Just a third of the senators are chosen at the same time, and then for terms of six years rather than the presidential four. Representatives are chosen from geographic districts within states—usually smaller than states—not only when a president runs but also every second year. They are nominated in party primaries or conventions, as is he, but within their state or district, not throughout the country, and then elected by the voters in the same jurisdiction, a far smaller body than the president's fifty-state electorate.

As aggregates, both the Senate and the House represent the whole country. But so does the president, one person. The House can always claim to be most up-to-date in its representation, but every four years the president makes the superior claim of a nationwide vote. Individually no House member (or senator, for that matter) can match that.

Senators and members of Congress have limited influence, at best, in primaries for presidential nominations, or in the national conventions that confirm the results, now shades of their former selves. Presidents are usually at least as limited in influence upon the state or district bodies that nominate representatives and senators, even those nominally of their own party. For in fact the local and state parties are not the same as the quadrennial national party at presidential elections. Money for campaigns can be a binding tie (and has been, on occasion, almost from the start). But by and large, local party affairs remain local, and state affairs state, in the conduct of nominations. In modern times, primary elections for the presidential nomination do lessen the influence of statewide party organizations, once supreme at national conventions, but that influence was usually less congressional than gubernatorial, so Congress scarcely loses by the change.

In short, the constitutional separation of president from Congress is reinforced by the separateness of their respective nominating processes and their electoral constituencies. That is why the separation flourishes, and has flourished, for the most part, since George Washington took his oath of office in 1789. And since the separation rests securely on those different political bases, checks and balances assure perpetual competition, because the president and Congress, each speaking "for" the country, share so widely in each other's functions.

That competition can be muted by concern for dangers from abroad, as was the case when President Washington began, and in the two world wars, and from time to time during the Cold War. Or it can be muted by concern for truly national crises, as in the secession crisis of 1861 or the collapse of the U.S. banking system in 1933. And it always can be tempered by comity among those engaged in governing—but of that our party politics offers no guarantee.

Given these circumstances, individuals are bound to matter in and to the presidency. Underlining this book, therefore, is the thought that a review of the first forty-one may help us as we choose the next president.

Each individual president exists and works in a specific social, economic, technological, and environmental framework, dominated by certain prevailing ideas and trends. All these condition politics and thus what given presidents find they can do, or feel they must attempt. Each also exists in a

specific frame of time, defined by modes of communication. For James Monroe, six weeks was not too long to wait for diplomatic correspondence from across the Atlantic. By Lincoln's time the interval had shrunk, with the advent of steamships, to twelve days. After 1867, the laying of the transatlantic cable made communication almost instantaneous—but instant pictures did not come for more than another century.

From 1789 until the eve of World War II, there virtually was no "institutional environment" for the presidency. The president had a private secretary or two (Lincoln in the Civil War had just two!), paid out of his own pocket until the twentieth century, and otherwise depended for all things he wanted done on the federal departments, with their heads in his cabinet, or the military chiefs and their services, or friendly souls in Congress and out, not least in his hometown.

The entire executive establishment consisted only of some 600 civilians when George Washington took charge. By the 1840s the number had risen to some 40,000, and by 1900 to some 100,000. Only in Franklin Roosevelt's time did it rise to a million, just before World War II. After the war it never fell below 2 million until Bill Clinton's time, when it was reduced by perhaps an eighth.

The White House was slow to change. As late as the war, FDR had only eleven civilian assistants, along with a budget-office staff of career civil servants. JFK's assistants amounted to twenty-two, a doubling in sixteen years, mostly because of Truman and Eisenhower innovations. Then, very shortly, President Nixon increased the number by a factor of five, to well over 100. The Clinton staff is larger still. Most of the load that was delegated to departments, or the military, or congressional leaders, or friends (and relatives) by presidents from Washington through Herbert Hoover and the early Franklin Roosevelt is now done, supervised, critiqued, or redone by presidential staff, many at the White House, and more at associated agencies "across the street" in two executive office buildings. Today, 2,000 or so people work for the presidency in the Executive Office of the President; 500 or so work for the president in the White House (clerical help included); 100 or so serve as top staffers; and ten to twenty aides have daily personal access to the president.

This enormous growth of staff has actually been less

responsive to administrative needs than to those of politics and technology. It reflects fast-rising public expectations of the presidency, which now is supposed to win wars, resist terror, keep public order, end recessions, guard against depressions, keep prices down and jobs up, save the environment, preserve social security, fight crime and drugs, maintain personal honor, serve as an example to the young, and with it all show "fiscal responsibility." Such expectations are now fed by electronic media, as well as the print press, which have been engaged in massive bursts of instant communication from all quarters simultaneously. What is communicated has to have a basis in events, but with the world at the disposal of the media, thanks to satellites, events from somewhere, about something, are a dime a dozen.

This naturally complicates the substance of policy and its communication to Congress, to agencies, and to the public. Recent presidents have wished to have their own aides—not a department head's, not someone else's—to work and advise on all aspects of all policies. Furthermore, the burgeoning press corps, always pressing, consists not just of "working stiffs," as in pre-television times, but also of reporters, whom television has transformed into celebrities. They, like all such, want their service fast and hot. In President Truman's time, his press secretary had two professional-level assistants. The number nowadays is over forty.

The institutional presidency is not an unmixed blessing for a president. Staffs are too large to be intimate, which means they are too remote to serve reliably as interpreters of what "the boss" really wants. They are subject to becoming "more royalist than the king." They also may attract to themselves more business than is useful for him. Worse still, they may confuse their own interests with his. And since transition funds are now available to bridge the gap between election and inaugural, all too many staff assistants may be young campaigners on their first federal assignment, as ignorant of Washington as the president-elect might be himself, and unprepared to help him master what he needs to know.

Despite staffs and the problems that go with them, recent presidents appear to experience the office in much the way their predecessors did. For the heart of the job is unchanged. It is the making and communicating of decisions, most of which do not originate with the president himself: their long histories are best known to others; their

Richard E. Neustadt at work
on *The American President*.



deadlines are set by fixed dates or events substantially beyond his control; and they reach him late, at the end of the process, with advisers split on what to do. All presidents, even recent ones, have faced such choices with the help of a few trusted persons, perhaps three or four, rarely more, who constitute an ultimate inner circle. They may be aides, or cabinet members, or close friends, or family members, like Milton Eisenhower and Hillary Rodham Clinton. What is crucial is that they are each of the president's own selection—someone he turns to repeatedly and who trusts him in turn. Those few may be the only people that a modern president thinks of as his real “staff,” the many others nominally in that category notwithstanding. In this regard, his subjective situation has a lot in common with that of every predecessor back to General Washington.

This book proceeds on that premise. It proceeds on the further premise that while history does not literally repeat itself, the situations of some presidents objectively resemble those of many others in certain characteristic ways.

In the final chapter of this book the authors turn to cardinal features of our constitutional design, its checks and balances. These separated institutions that share powers engage as they must in endless competition; they tend toward stalemate in the short run, and are slow to respond to slender majorities, though they are capable of registering national consensus with rapidity. But consensus is not easily reached, save for events so grim and clear-cut that time may not allow for proper remedies. And competition can easily get out of hand, leading toward legislative stasis and administrative chaos. For a country as extensive and diverse as ours, there must be something good about this separated system, since it has endured now for 211 years and plainly has a future. But its potential for failure in the eyes of most proponents of all policies much of the time, and its extraordinary messiness, not to say expense, both in delaying and

in implementing what it does get done, engender critical and sometimes despairing pleas for reform of one kind or another from deeply concerned thinkers—and have done so ever since the eighteenth century.

A discussion of checks and balances seems a fitting way for this book to close. For complicated reasons bound up in history—not quite what Madison expected but more or less consistent with his basic views—the system he created manages to shake off every decade's effort to erase its fundamentals for the sake of theory. Nevertheless, it does continue to change incrementally at the margins, responding to the pulls and tugs of social, economic, and technological development. The responses can lag, some are perverse, and all have unintended consequences. Injustice often follows. To rational minds the process is a mess. No one can fail to fume at some of its results. Yet in this country, so far, we have had only one civil war. Of all our presidential thinkers, Madison, I dare say, would have been almost satisfied by that. Most of the time, I am prepared to join him.

But that is a perspective from inside the States. When I go overseas, as periodically I do, I cannot help but notice how our separated system reinforces tendencies toward continental self-absorption, disappointing what our friends abroad expect from the world's oldest democracy and only superpower. They forget that even our most generous phase of genuine concern for our allies—and for endeavors with them—got kick-started by the threat of Joseph Stalin. German submarines precipitated our engagement in World War I, Japanese bombers did the same for World War II, and Stalin played a crucial part in setting off the retrospective Golden Era of the Marshall Plan. Left to our own devices we incline toward isolation.

The complicated workings of our separated system, with president and Congress independent yet intertwined, are a contributory cause of this isolation. Actions are so fraught with emotion, and yet so far from final—almost every issue can be and usually is reopened for discussion—that the energy and interests of our leaders are consumed, with little left for the outside world save when it forcibly intrudes. From an eighteenth-century perspective, Madison, I think, would not have minded. From a twenty-first-century perspective—oh, how our allies do mind! Sympathy tempers my share in his satisfaction.

THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT

EPISODE TEN: The Balance of Power

Bill Clinton

Narrator:

43.76

After Taft, the balance of power shifted again under the force of Franklin Roosevelt, leading to an era when the executive branch dominated like it never had before. It wasn't until after Watergate that Congress seized back its powers and restored an earlier sense of balance. But by the 1990s that balance had been upset once again, this time by an intense new level of partisanship. No president in modern times was more impacted by political divisiveness than was the 42nd president, Bill Clinton.

WILLIAM JEFFERSON CLINTON
Second Chances

Neustadt:			Our system of government, those
146:11:02:30			separated institutions sharing and
	71.74		competing for powers are if anything, too
			separated today.
145; 10:26:10			By the time of Bill Clinton, the glue that had
	71.58		held Congress together in a tight,
			hierarchical relationship had been
			dissolved.
127; 13:37:20			Only once has polarization got so great,
	69.89		only once have our national parties
127; 13:35:25			fractured. When they did we had a Civil
	69.88		War. We're not at such a point, but you
			have dangerous potentials in the country.
			Truly dangerous.
Clinton:			The presidency can still be a place of great
157; 18:32:10			influence and power, it's still the central
	74.70		office in the country particularly in times of
			adversity or crisis, but it can be in good
			times as well but it requires a greater level
			of energy. There's not an automatic
			deference to the presidency. But I still think
			it's the greatest job in the world and I still
			think its very, very important to the
			American people.

Narrator: William Jefferson Clinton was born in 1946
43.77 as William Blythe III in the small town of
43.78 Hope, Arkansas. By grade school he was
so outgoing, he was already recognized as
a young man with a future in politics.

Clinton: I think what shaped my early interest in
156; 17:56:30 politics were a couple of things. First of all I
74.08 was always, always interested in civil rights
and it was the defining political issue of my
childhood. And I think the other thing that
really had a lot to do with it was the fact
that we got a television when I was nine
years old. And I got to watch in 1956 the
Republican and Democratic Conventions
on television—I watched the whole thing
and I was utterly fascinated by it.

Narrator: Bill Clinton was the son of a salesman who
43.79A died before he was born, and a nurse,
Virginia Dell, who was his greatest
influence.

Clinton: She taught me these things: never give up;
156; 17:59:57 never forget where you came from; and
74.18 never lose your compassion for people who
are less fortunate than you are.

Narrator: From early on, he always attracted

43.79B attention. He was musical, immensely popular, easygoing and ambitious.

43.79 In 1963, at age 17, he went to experience Washington D.C. firsthand. There, he got to shake hands with his political hero, John F. Kennedy. The encounter changed Bill Clinton's life forever.

Clinton:
156; 17:57:36

74.14 Thankfully we were lined up in alphabetical order by state so I was from Arkansas. And I also was bigger than most of the people around me, so I sort of elbowed my way up to make sure that if he didn't shake hands with everyone I'd get to shake hands with him.

156; 17:58:51

74.16 When I went home I had the feeling that if I worked hard and prepared myself, that I could have an impact. And that was a gift that I got out of that week.

Narrator:

43.80 The following year Clinton entered
43.81 Georgetown University, where he became known for his self-confidence, his intelligence, and as a man in a hurry. After spending two years at Oxford on a Rhodes Scholarship, he attended Yale Law School. There he met Hillary Rodham, an active

idealist whose no-nonsense ways were the perfect complement to his freewheeling charm.

43.82 Accepting a position on the faculty of the University of Arkansas Law School in 1972, Clinton used it as a springboard into Arkansas politics.

Clinton:
156; 18:00:33

74.22 I ran for Congress in 1974 and was defeated and then in '76 I was attorney general and I loved that job but a vacancy occurred in the governor's race and so I ran and I won and it was exhilarating and I loved it.

Sidey:
156; 18:00:19

74.19 Now you were a governor at age thirty-two, that's awfully young.

Clinton:
156; 18:00:26

74.20 Very young! Maybe too young...

Narrator:

43.83 As Governor, Bill Clinton bristled with ideas and energy. But he also made a series of political miscalculations, causing him to lose his bid for reelection.

Clinton:
156; 18:01:31

74.24 The people of my state had the opinion that I was a smart person who cared about them but I was too bull-headed, and I didn't

listen to them enough.

156; 18:02:34

74.25

They told me what I had done wrong, they then gave me a second chance to serve. And I think the service was I know it was good for me and my family, I believe it was good for my state.

Narrator:

43.86

Just ten years later, at age 46, Bill Clinton was running for president.

Sidey:

156; 18:06:42

74.32

When you ran in 1992, you said, "You may only be fit to be president when you are not obsessed with it."

Clinton:

156; 18:06:51

74.33

I really did feel that by 1992 because of various things that happened in my personal and work life I was able to run with great passion but with less obsession than would have been the case, for example, if I had been the candidate in 1988.

Narrator:

43.86B

Early in his campaign his candidacy was threatened by rumors regarding infidelity in his personal life. With the strong support of his wife Hillary, Bill Clinton became the first presidential candidate ever to publicly admit to marital problems. But it was behind them

now, he said, and entirely a private matter. The candidate insisted that he be judged not on his private life but by his performance and his political record.

43.86A His words made sense to a public that seemed to be growing more tolerant, and from a position low in the polls Bill Clinton soared to second place in the New Hampshire primary, earning the nickname "The Comeback Kid."

Neustadt:
127; 13:15:50

69.67 He's a man who loves people, loves to talk, loves to circulate, is thus a natural politician. And the naturalness of his political qualities extends to a very sharp instinct for campaigning, for feeling the moods of his audience and responding to them, and it has served him well.

Narrator:

43.87 By sticking to the issues, and promising the kind of change that only a young man of a new generation could bring about, Clinton won a resounding victory in a three-way presidential race in November.

Clinton:
156; 18:08:21

I felt a profound gratitude to the American people. But there was a little bit of me that

74.35 felt like the dog that was chasing the pickup
you know and finally caught it. So now what
do I do, you know? But I was also humbled
by it. I think you know any person who is
not a little humbled by being given this
responsibility, doesn't understand what he
or she has got a hold of.

Clinton:
156; 18:06:08

74.31 And I think that when a person gets this
office, you feel always never quite
adequate to do the work. No one is smart
enough or wise enough, or strong enough.

Narrator:

43.88 Determined to make his mark as a
Democratic reformer, Clinton appointed
minorities to his administration and initiated
a national dialogue on race. He appointed
women to some of the highest positions in
national government. And he set in motion
an ambitious agenda to reshape numerous
social programs, including a bold initiative
to create universal healthcare coverage.
Republicans criticized it as an over-
ambitious, liberal experiment, and health
care became the rallying cry for a strong
political opposition. It led to sweeping
congressional victories in 1994, with the
Republicans gaining control of both houses
of Congress for the first time in forty years.

Clinton:
156; 18:16:03

74.49

There's always been periods of more intense partisanship followed by periods of lesser intensity. And it was something I'm not used to, didn't cultivate, don't believe in and would like to see diminished.

Narrator:

43.89

Partisanship in the government reached epidemic proportions by the end of Bill Clinton's first term. Twice in 1995 the government was forced to shut down, with Clinton and the Republican-controlled Congress at loggerheads over the budget. The spirit of compromise—key to the workings of the Madisonian system of government—was degenerating into a system of mutual antagonisms.

43.90

Shortly after Bill Clinton was soundly re-elected to a second term the Madisonian system was put to a further test. When the Supreme Court ruled in the civil case of Jones versus Clinton that a sitting president could be sued for actions taken prior to his term, Clinton was forced to testify in a sexual harassment lawsuit against him. It was in this politically charged atmosphere that an independent counsel, with virtually unlimited investigative powers, intensified

his scrutiny. The presidency was now under siege on all fronts.

43.91 Failing to uncover incriminating evidence in what became known as Whitewater, Special Prosecutor Kenneth Starr shifted his focus from Clinton's business dealings to his personal life. And in 1998 he exposed an affair between the president and a White House intern named Monica Lewinsky, claiming that Clinton had perjured himself when he denied it under oath in the Paula Jones civil case. On December 19, the Republican-controlled House of Representatives voted to impeach. The official charges were perjury and obstruction of justice, but throughout the trial the underlying dynamic was political.

Sidey:
157; 18:20:52

74.52 1998 was a difficult year for you, Mr. President, both professionally and personally. During the impeachment process the issue of character was raised—a hard one to define by anybody's measure. But from your own experience how important is that issue of character for a president?

Clinton:

I think it's very important. But I think a lot of

157; 18:21:11

74.53

the people who talk about it do so in ways that give it a very limited definition, normally for purposes that are quite self-serving. That is, most of the people I've known have demonstrated great character didn't go around talking about it.

157; 18:21:35

74.54

Now I made a personal mistake which became a matter of public debate. I've tried to acknowledge my wrongdoing and say that I was sorry about it. But I also have tried to demonstrate presidential character by standing up for the interests of the country and doing what I told the American people I would do when I ran for office.

157; 18:23:23

74.56

But I think that it is important for us to remember that there is also a difference between character and reputation and that under the guise of elevating character, there are a large number of people in our country today that believe the way they can get what they want in life is from destroying someone else's reputation. None us is ever a complete judge of another's character, only God can fully judge that.

Narrator:

43.92

Throughout the Senate trial there loomed a major constitutional issue—of exactly what

constituted an "impeachable offense," and whether the president's misleading testimony in the Jones case and before the Starr Grand Jury, rose to the level of "high crimes and misdemeanors." If an elected president could be removed, scholars warned, on the basis of his personal relationships and an effort to cover them up, the Madisonian system itself could be in danger of collapse.

Neustadt:

127; 13:18:52

69.70

127; 13:19:48

69.71

While some people hated Clinton to an extraordinary degree—a hatred which says more about the country and its times, than it does about him—many others have had a fondness for him that owes nothing to ignorance about defects in his private life. He's had the good fortune to have a personality which encourages discrimination between himself as president and himself as a private individual and his personality has conquered all kinds of doubts about him.

Narrator:

43.92A

Over time, Bill Clinton reoriented the Democratic party toward mainstream issues, including balancing the budget and reforming welfare. And he presided over one of the strongest economies in the 20th

century. Despite impassioned calls for his resignation, throughout the trial Clinton's approval ratings remained extremely high. And in the end, the Senate listened to the people. As a body it could not muster the required two-thirds vote, or even a simple majority, to convict Bill Clinton of any charges.

Sidey:
157; 18:23:54

74.57

The American people spoke out loud and clear throughout 1998—you know that better than anybody.

Clinton:
157; 18:24:??

They were very good to me.

Sidey:
157: 18:24:??

What did you learn about the power of the people and the role the public plays in exercising political power from here?

Clinton:
157; 18:24:15

74.58

I learned all over again the same lesson I learned as a child—that there are certain rules of human conduct that apply to all of us and when we make a mistake you have to live with the consequences of your actions whether they are public or not, we always pay, nobody gets out for free. And second thing I learned is that the Framers were smart—they designed the Constitution

to prevent partisan passions from overriding common sense. But the third thing was that the American people almost always get it right.

156; 18:04:41

74.28

They gave me a second chance. And I think if we think about life as getting second chances as long as you learn from your mistakes, I think it's a helpful way to look at life, and so I do believe in a God of second chances.

Sidey:

How's the presidency changed you?

Clinton:

157; 18:38:29

74.79

157; 18:40:28

74.80

You know I've had to ask for forgiveness in a way that most people never do in public although nearly everybody does in private at some point during a lifetime. I've learned a lot about giving up the little things in life so you can focus on the big things. And if I had only felt I was doing it for myself, I'm not sure I would have had the strength. But knowing that I was doing it for the American people helped me, and I'm very grateful for that because I think it's something that I can carry with me for the rest of my life.

Narrator:

43.93B

The only Democrat to be reelected president since FDR, Bill Clinton both

reflected and benefitted from an increasingly tolerant America. And while most Americans deplored his personal acts in the Lewinsky case, they refused to judge his public role by his private behavior.

Neustadt:

145; 10:39:37

71.67

From Nixon's time on, though we weren't very conscious of it to begin with, it is now plain that every President immediately upon election, attracts the serious intent of political opponents and the professional interest of the media in tearing him down and pushing him toward resignation.

145; 10:40:11

71.68

It used to be that one of the most fundamental powers underlying a president's position was a fixed term. We now see that the Nixon precedent has unfixed the term and has created both for media and for politicians incentives to try to shorten the term. I find that sad in a way that goes far beyond Bill Clinton, it affects all successive presidents as far as we can see.

Narrator:

43.95

The presidency, now well into its third century, is in many ways not the same institution it once was. Our early presidents worked virtually alone, with a single

secretary, or two, paid out of their own pocket. Today the White House staff numbers more than 500; all together, the executive branch consists of nearly two million civilians. From humble beginnings an almost baffling complexity has arisen.

And yet through it all there remains a single person at the center who must shoulder the office. However he (some day she) has arrived at the White House—whether through heroism or compromise, through family ties or through happenstance, through political savvy or passionate vision or lonely integrity, each inherits and builds upon the work of his predecessors. Bringing to bear talents, and also human flaws, and sometimes a rare capacity to rise to greatness, these individuals together embody The American President.

PROGRAM

Remarks
The President

Philip B. Kunhardt, Jr.
Executive Producer
The American President

Sy Sternberg
Chairman, President and CEO
New York Life Insurance Company

Profile Introduction
Andrew Young

Screening
"Thomas Jefferson"

Profile Introduction
Senator Edward M. Kennedy

Screening
"John F. Kennedy"

Closing Remarks
The President

Reception to follow in the State Dining Room

THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT

Commentator
Richard E. Neustadt

Narrator
Hugh Sidey

Music
Michael Starobin

Co-Writers, Co-Producers, Co-Directors
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Executive Producers
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Chief Academic Consultant
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Senior Historical Consultant
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Underwriter
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Source: All Sources : / . . . / : **Presidential Documents**Terms: **atl 3 (president kennedy)** and **date(geq (01/21/93) and leq (04/05/00))** ([Edit Search](#))*Public Papers of the Presidents, October 29, 1993*

Public Papers of the Presidents

October 29, 1993**CITE:** 29 Weekly Comp. Pres. Doc. 2204**LENGTH:** 2728 words**HEADLINE:** Remarks at the Dedication of the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library Museum in Boston, Massachusetts**BODY:***ENTIRE PIECE VERY GOOD LANGUAGE ON KENNEDY*

Thank you very much, Senator Kennedy, for those moving words and for your friendship and your leadership. Jackie and Caroline and John and all the members of the Kennedy family here assembled -- Congressman Kennedy, I thank you for those fine remarks -- distinguished Senators and Members of Congress and Governors here present and all of the rest of you who share a part of this historic day.

I want you to know that I felt very much at home today when I got out of the car and the Harvard band was playing the Yale song. And it reminded me of the time when **President Kennedy** got a degree from Yale, and he said he had the best of all worlds, a Harvard education and a Yale degree. [*Laughter*] I had the Harvard band and the Yale song. Harvard has higher standards. They haven't offered me a degree yet. But for some of us, music is more important than degrees. [*Laughter*]

The great champion of Irish mythology was the young warrior Cu Chulainn. According to legend, he was a hero without peer among mortals. One day a priest told him, "You will be splendid and renowned but short-lived." Cu Chulainn replied, "It is a wonderful thing if I am but one day and one night in the world, provided that my fame and deeds live after me."

Like Cu Chulainn's legend, John Kennedy's fleeting time among us remains a singular story in the history of our great Nation. He was our President for only a thousand days, but as has been said so eloquently by members of his family, he changed the way we think about our country, our world, and our own obligations to the future. He dared Americans to join him on an adventure he called the New Frontier. Listen now to what he said then: "The new frontier of which I speak is not a set of promises. It is a set of challenges. It sums up not what I intend to offer the American people, but what I intend to ask of them." He inspired millions of us to take a very personal responsibility for moving our country forward and for advancing the cause of freedom throughout the world. He convinced us that our efforts would be both exciting and rewarding. He reminded us that our democracy at its best is a bold and daring adventure.

Three decades have passed since **President Kennedy's** 3 years in office. But his legacy endures in the new frontiers we still explore. Think of his appeal for religious tolerance to the Houston Baptist ministers, and remember that just this week we passed in the Senate Senator Kennedy's religious freedom restoration act. And I thank you very much for that.

Think of the appeal he made for basic civil rights, and remember that it was just this year that we passed the motor voter act, which was the most important piece of civil rights legislation passed in a long time, and that we now have, I am proud to say, the most racially diverse administration in the history of the United States.