



All the Presidents' Spokesmen: Spinning the News- -White House Press Secretaries from Franklin D. Roosevelt to George W. Bush

Woody Klein

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This is the first volume to chronicle the story of the evolution of the symbiotic relationship between the presidential press secretaries and reporters who covered White House news during the terms of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard M. Nixon, Gerald R. Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush. Author Woody Klein has been both a reporter (for the *Washington Post* and the *New York World-Telegram & Sun*) and a press secretary himself to New York City Mayor John V. Lindsay, who ran for president in 1972. The book reveals how the presidential press secretaries' role has evolved from old-fashioned public relations into a smooth-working system of releasing news and responding to reporters' questions at daily briefings by portraying the president in the best possible light. Klein ferrets out fresh, anecdotal information and includes interviews with nationally known personalities—including former White House press secretaries and notable journalists who have covered the White House. He brings to life the personalities and views of every presidential spokesman on how the job has grown in stature as the press secretaries or spinmeisters have become high-profile officials.

Klein reveals how the tension between government and the media—normally healthy in any democracy—has resulted in the manipulation of facts and the release of favorable official news. It started subtly in the Roosevelt administration and has been carefully honed with the transformation of the media in the information and technology revolution; he shows how it has been refined to the point where it is now recognized for what it is: slanting or packaging the news in favor of the president to make it acceptable—even desired—by the public. Perception quickly becomes reality, and once the facts of a situation have been accepted by the establishment—politicians and the press alike—it becomes virtually impossible to change people's minds about them. The book documents scores of examples of White House spin by topic rather than chronologically—for example, how different press secretaries managed the news in wartime, in foreign policy, in scandals, and in a host of domestic issues such as education and national disasters. Twenty-three press secretaries are included. The most notable among them are Steve Early (Roosevelt), James Hagerty (Eisenhower), Pierre Salinger (Kennedy), Bill Moyers (Johnson), Ron Ziegler (Nixon), Marlin Fitzwater (Reagan and G. H. W. Bush), Dee Dee Myers (Clinton), Mike McCurry (Clinton), Joe Lockhart (Clinton), Ari Fleischer (Bush), Scott McClellan (Bush), and Tony Snow (Bush).

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