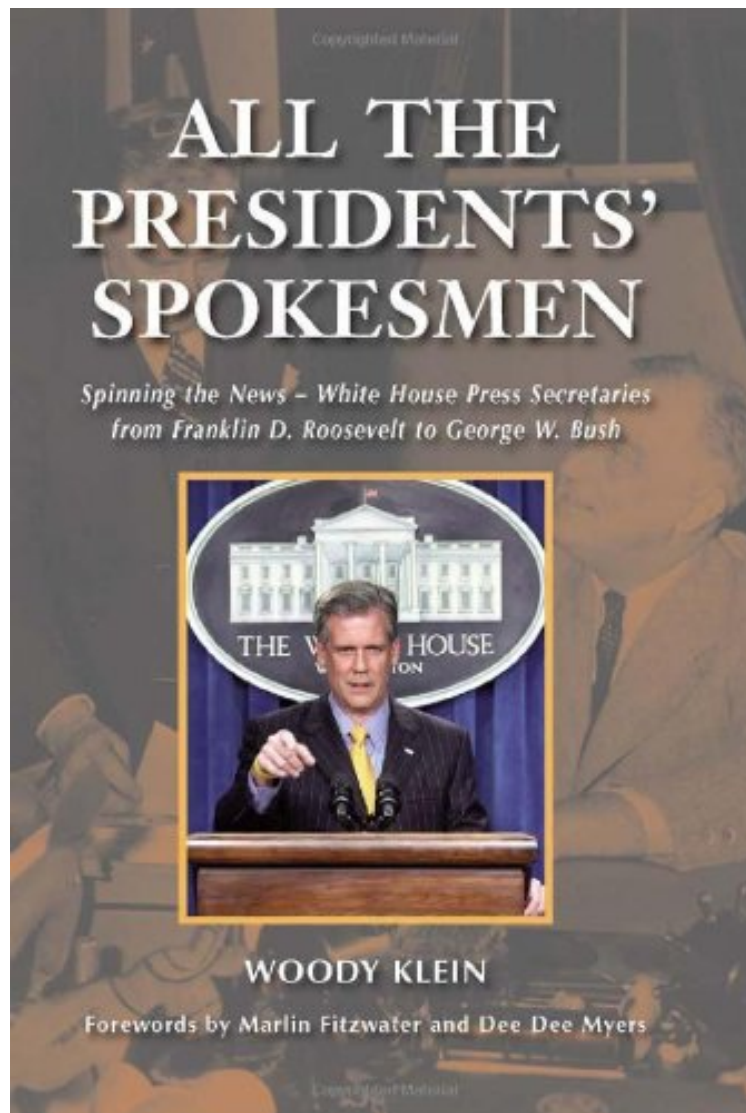


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All the Presidents' Spokesmen: Spinning the News--White House Press Secretaries from Franklin D. Roosevelt to George W. Bush

Woody Klein

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Woody Klein : All the Presidents' Spokesmen: Spinning the News--White House Press Secretaries from Franklin D. Roosevelt to George W. Bush before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised All the Presidents' Spokesmen: Spinning the News--White House Press Secretaries from Franklin D. Roosevelt to George W. Bush:

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Fantastic but for one thing
By Karlis Streips
I am a political journalist, and I looked forward to this book with great anticipation around Christmastime. The great aspects of the book are several in number. First of all, for anyone who has followed American politics, many of the people in Woody Klein's book are known quantities. That is to say, everyone has seen Ronald Ziegler evading and lying through his teeth, Marlon Fitzwater yucking it up, Ari Fleischer being combative and, tragically, Jim Brady lying in a puddle of blood on a sidewalk. Mr Klein's book fleshes all of these people out beyond what we already know from having seen them on TV a million times, and that is wonderful. The second thing is that the author has chosen to divide the book up not by press secretary, offering a short biography of each, but by issue, examining the way in which press secretaries react to categories of occurrences such as domestic crises, the Cold War, global issues and presidential scandals. I consider that to be an excellent way to present the information. Third, the book contains quite a few excerpts from actual press conferences, and that provides a really stellar look at the give-and-take in the relationship between the White House press corps and the press secretary of the day -- combative in some instances, jovial in others. The four, not five stars are due to something that absolutely drives me mad -- the apparent failure of anyone to proofread the damn thing! Once again fulsome praise is given in the acknowledgement section to lists of editors who apparently should all be sacked for incompetence. In just one paragraph of "All the President's Spokesmen" we find the sentence "Bill Moyers [...] has since become one of the nations most highly respected television commentators" and "... he said: 'Potomac Fever can produce a bloated sensation--particularly in the area of the ego--that causes press secretaries to take themselves much too seriously,' he said." There is a difference between "nations" and "nation's" even if they do sound the same, and two "he said's" in one sentence is simply one "he said" too many. That said, I would imagine that there are plenty of fans of politics and journalism who do not grind their teeth at the impending collapse of the English language. They, like I, will enjoy this book, only a bit more for keeping their teeth safe.

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Great book by someone with experience...
By Avid Reader
I really enjoyed this book. The author has clearly done the research and work to create a very readable, accessible book. I especially enjoyed how the history and evolution of the press secretary's role itself was traced, all the way from Roosevelt to the end of the Bush administration. And, as the other reviewer mentioned, the way the book was arranged, by challenges faced rather than simply chronologically really made the book even more interesting. It was good to see and hear the story from the other side things, so to speak. I did find myself a bit more sympathetic to what this very tough job entails, although I still found it difficult to stomach much of what the Bush administration presented as it's take. I've always felt they were the masters when it came to double-speak and spin. Perhaps because they did their job so well and the press lost its way in those years, We the People lost in so many ways. I guess I was waiting for the author to get tougher on them. He never did, but this was still a book well worth the time.

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).

"Klein, former New York City Mayor John Lindsay's press secretary, explains how the role of presidential press

secretary has evolved from the public relations directors known to FDR and Truman to the spinmeisters of recent administration. He organizes material by topics that include the Cold War, presidential scandals, domestic crises, and global issues. This book is a welcome marriage of well-researched scholarship and an engagingly fresh style. Most sections are well documented, and there is an extensive bibliography. Recommended for public and academic communications collections." - Library Journal "All the President's Spokesmen, is the first to explore in such breadth the complex and often tense relationship between presidents, presidential press secretaries and the reporters who cover the White House. This is wonderful stuff if you're interested in such things and you won't hear any of it at the next press conference." - Westport News

About the Author

WOODY KLEIN is a former Press Secretary to a New York City Mayor, a former award-winning investigative and political reporter for daily newspapers in Washington, D.C., and New York, and an award-winning historian. He is the author of *Westport, Connecticut: The Story of a New England Town's Rise to Prominence*, winner of the Connecticut League of History Organizations' Book Award *Toward Humanity and Justice: The Writings of Dr. Kenneth B. Clark*, Scholar of the *Brown v. Board of Education* Decision in 1954 (2004), winner of Best Book of the Year award from the Connecticut Press Club in 2006 *d Liberties Lost: The Endangered Legacy of the ACLU* (2006). He also authored *Let in the Sun* (1962) and *Lindsay's Promise* (1970).