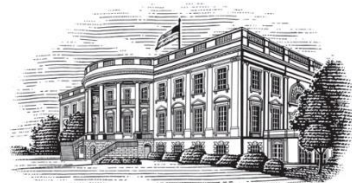


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THE WHITE HOUSE
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

NEW Episode: *The White House 1600 Sessions* Podcast “Advancers”

White House Historical Association President Stewart McLaurin Explores the Work of Presidential Advance Teams with Former White House Staff Jean Becker and Tom Collamore

July 23, 2026 (Washington, D.C.) – The White House Historical Association today released a new episode of [*The White House 1600 Sessions* podcast](#) examining the people behind some of the most recognizable events in presidential history. In conversation with co-authors Jean Becker, former deputy press secretary to First Lady Barbara Bush and chief of staff to President George H. W. Bush, and Tom Collamore, longtime advisor to President George H.W. Bush and the George & Barbara Bush Foundation, Stewart McLaurin, president of the Association, takes viewers behind the scenes of history to explore the vital work of advance teams that plan and coordinate official events for the highest office.

In their new book, [*Don't Tell the President: The Best, the Worst, and Mostly Untold Stories from Presidential Advance Staff Throughout the Years*](#), the co-authors describe how before a president arrives for a speech, attends a state visit, or makes a campaign stop, advance teams have meticulously calculated every visual and logistical detail. Throughout the episode, Becker and Collamore share firsthand stories and insights drawn from interviews with nearly 100 former staffers, from President Lyndon B. Johnson through President Barack Obama, detailing the precision the role demands and the unanticipated moments that can arise despite even the most diligent planning.

"Behind every seamless presidential event is an army of people who arrive days or even weeks earlier to plan the route, the stage, the lighting, the security, the flags, the motorcade, the backdrop, and sometimes even the step stool," said McLaurin.

The conversation features memorable stories from presidential campaigns, international travel, White House events, and other moments when even the most carefully planned events took unexpected turns. Among the most harrowing moments are the difficult hours following 9/11 when President George W. Bush rushed back to Washington, D.C. from his visit to an elementary school in Sarasota, Florida, and the events surrounding President Ronald Reagan's assassination attempt in 1981—all of which demonstrate the fortitude of those who have held this occupation.

"The American people need to know what goes on behind the scenes and appreciate the people who do it," said Becker.

Becker and Collamore also discuss how presidential advance evolved into a more organized and professionalized operation over the course of the twentieth century, as well as how advance teams

developed increasingly formal relationships with event hosts and foreign governments. This evolution required trust between the White House and the public to support presidents, first ladies, and vice presidents throughout their travels.

"These are 96 unsung heroes who've had a chance to tell their story," said Collamore. "They were trained, like all of us were as staff people, to work behind the curtain, stay out of the photo op, don't take credit for anything. And now, with the passage of time, they get to tell their stories."

The White House 1600 Sessions podcast is available on Apple Podcasts and Spotify.

The full video of this podcast episode is also available on the White House Historical Association's YouTube channel [here](#).

For more information, please contact press@whha.org.

The White House 1600 Sessions

The White House Historical Association's President Stewart McLaurin is the host of *The White House 1600 Sessions*, the Association's official audio and video podcast devoted to exploring the history, cultural impact, untold stories, and personal accounts of America's most iconic residence and highest office.

About the White House Historical Association

Founded in 1961 by First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy, the White House Historical Association is the nonprofit, nonpartisan organization entrusted with preserving and sharing the history of the White House. Supported entirely by private philanthropy and the sale of educational books and products, the Association reaches millions of students, teachers, and lifelong learners through research and scholarship initiatives, public programming, and the authoritative titles published by its independent press. Throughout each presidency, the Association works with the Offices of the First Lady and the White House Curator to acquire and preserve historic objects for the White House Fine and Decorative Arts Collection. The Association also operates The People's House: A White House Experience, a free, immersive, educational museum in Washington, D.C., which welcomes hundreds of thousands of visitors annually. To learn more about the White House Historical Association, please visit WhiteHouseHistory.org.

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