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## **NEW Episode: *The White House 1600 Sessions* Podcast “The History of State Funerals”**

*White House Historical Association President Stewart McLaurin Discusses the History and Execution of State Funerals with Former National Event Planners*

**February 11, 2025 (Washington, D.C.)** – The White House Historical Association released a new episode of *The White House 1600 Sessions* podcast today about the history of the State Funeral and the roles of those who coordinate the public and private moments we are familiar with today. In the episode, Stewart McLaurin, president of the Association, is joined by two individuals formerly with Joint Task Force - National Capital Region (JTF-NCR) and the U.S. Army Military District of Washington (USAMDW), the organizations which help keep the nation’s capital safe, honor each presidency from Inauguration to their final passing, as well as perform other ceremonial duties across the country and around the world.

Michael Wagner, the former Chief of National Event Planning for JTF-NCR, and Retired Major General Galen B. Jackman, former Commander of Joint Force Headquarters - National Capital Region and USAMDW, spoke of their notable memories and the protocols involved in supporting a bereaved family and the country through a time of transition.

“Each of these Presidential State Funerals are ceremonial and grand, but they are also very personal,” McLaurin said. “I remember Susan Ford sharing the story of when the plane flew over The Big House where her father had played football at the University of Michigan, and that wing dipped in salute. For her, that was the most emotional moment of the whole thing, and perhaps the one that would have meant the most to her father.”

At the helm of national event planning for over 20 years, Wagner recalls the unique relationship of working with presidential staff and families from pre-inauguration planning through the funeral itself.

“The events that I think bring the nation together tend to be ones of hope and sorrow,” reflected Wagner. “One of the things that the military does well is plan. Another thing that the military likes to do is train, and we have a robust training program in which we rehearse ceremonies at the United States Capitol, at Joint Base Andrews, and at Washington National Cathedral.”

Maj. Gen. Jackman became a familiar face as he personally escorted former First Lady Nancy Reagan through the events of President Ronald Reagan’s State Funeral. President Reagan’s funeral set the standard for what we expect to see today, with ceremonies held in a former president’s home state, events in Washington, D.C., and then the final burial, all taking place in a span of 7 to 10 days.

“I think the way that I approached it, I was going to treat Mrs. Reagan like I was going to treat my wife and my mother: with great respect,” stated Maj. Gen. Jackman. “I wanted to make sure that there were no surprises for her...and I tried to, in as much as I could, stay out of the spotlight.”

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

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

For more information, please contact [press@whha.org](mailto: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**

The White House Historical Association was founded in 1961 by First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy to support her vision to restore and preserve the Executive Mansion and its legacy for generations to come. Mrs. Kennedy sought to inspire Americans, especially children, to explore and engage with American history and its presidents. Supported entirely by private resources, the Association is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that has contributed more than \$115 million to the White House in fulfillment of its mission. To learn more about the White House Historical Association, please visit [WhiteHouseHistory.org](http://WhiteHouseHistory.org).

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