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Former White House helicopter pilot provides rare insider view of LBJ, Nixon and Ford

Inside the President's Helicopter By Lt. Col. Gene T. Boyer with Jackie Boor 420 pages, 6 X 9 Hardcover—\$24.95 Soft cover—\$17.95 ISBN: 978-1-934980-91-0 Available at www.cablepublishing.com E-mail orders at nan@cablepublishing.com or call (715) 374-8499

"When we picked up to hover, the tail started dropping and my heart stopped. The extra luggage had weighted us down and I had to make a much slower, groaning turn on take-off. Then again, everything felt heavy that day. The President and Mrs. Nixon would both note this "awful, ungodly sound" in their accounts of August 9, 1974. But as far as all the cameras could see, the take-off was smooth and unremarkable ..."

Cable Publishing recently released the long-anticipated "Inside the President's Helicopter: Reflections of a White House Senior Pilot" by Lt. Col. Gene T. Boyer with Jackie Boor. Boyer flew for the U.S. Army's White House Executive Flight Detachment from 1964 to 1975 and was the unit's commander for seven of those years. Flying President Nixon off the lawn in Army One the day he resigned is only one of numerous historically pivoting moments when the world saw a helicopter but those in the cockpit saw much more.

Boyer's fascinating story begins in Akron, Ohio, where as a dirt-poor kid he struggled with his family through the Great Depression before landing a football scholarship to Ohio University. After graduation, he was drafted into the Army and it was that lean, gritty upbringing, his iron-willed work ethic and a daredevil spirit that attracted him to helicopter flight school at Fort Sill, Okla., in 1953. From the Korean DMZ to the jungles of Venezuela, from flying NATO VIPs in Europe to combat rescue missions in Vietnam, Boyer and Boor take the reader on one riveting, wind-driven adventure after another.

It is impossible to fully grasp the magnitude of Boyer's accomplishments without looking at numbers: 6,900 hours helicopter flight time, 368 combat hours, 580 "code one" presidential missions, 451 Nixon flights, and 55 flights with at least one foreign head-of-state on board and two forced landings – no crashes. Boyer flew in 49 states and 17 countries. He was the first pilot to fly a sitting President and First Lady into a combat zone in 1969 and recruited the first three African-American pilots to fly for the White House, one of which was his co-pilot the day Nixon resigned.

In addition to the first family and White House regulars like General William Westmoreland, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and Chief of Staff Bob Haldeman, notable passengers included the Shah of Iran, Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, President Anwar Sadat, President Dwight Eisenhower, CBS anchor Walter Cronkite, John Wayne, Winnie the Pooh and literary great John Steinbeck who wrote of his experience: "I wish I could tell you about these pilots. They make me sick with envy. They ride their vehicles the way a man controls a fine, well-trained quarter horse. They weave along stream beds, rise like swallows to clear trees, they turn and twist and dip like swifts in the evening..."

With nearly 100 photos, Boyer's memoirs concludes with his accounts of recent work he has done to preserve the history of the US Army's nearly two decades of flying for the White House and his work in finding and restoring Nixon's Last Flight helicopter. He also recalls the "festive" after-party he hosted for famed talk show host David Frost following his completion of the Frost/Nixon interviews in 1977 and the scene that didn't make it into Ron Howard's award-winning film – Boyer fishing Frost's swim trunks out of his pool the next morning.

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