

Our four-term man in the White House

This week's story on Henry Kissinger is the work of White House Correspondent Hugh Sidey, who during 16 years in Washington has covered four Presidents and the men around them. Since he began writing his Presidency column for LIFE six years ago, we have put close to a quarter of a million of his words in print.

"There has never been a presidential aide quite like Henry Kissinger," reports Sidey. "To the best of my knowledge, McGeorge Bundy, his counterpart in the Kennedy administration, never got calls during duty hours from Raquel Welch. And I never heard L.B.J.'s assistant Walt Rostow poke fun at himself the way Kissinger did when he remarked, of a newspaper picture of him with Nixon, 'But did you see the one of me kissing his ring?' I'm convinced that this singular man works harder, knows more and has been granted a broader charter than any comparable figure in modern history."

Although the amount already written about Kissinger is approaching encyclopedic proportions, Sidey found that the job of getting the facts he needed was "horrendous." Seeing Kissinger himself was "both gratifying and frustrating. I have jumped in and out of his office as many as three times in ten minutes, whenever the presidential button flashed on his phone console. His secretaries made the waiting very pleasant, but the shuttlecock technique made a shambles out of my notebook."



HUGH SIDEY

As LIFE columnist or TIME correspondent (he now also holds the title of TIME Bureau Chief), Sidey's years in the White House have made him an expert. Though his fascination for the office of President never wavered, he has had to adjust his reporting style to the different men who have occupied it. Johnson he recalls as "a very direct man. I was able to interview him frequently, and many of my columns grew out of informal conversations. Nixon is a more private person, so I have to work the edges, interviewing the people around him and assembling whatever fragments of information I can pick up during the week. Only once has Nixon ever spoken to me about a column. One night about a year ago he called me about a piece on Vietnam in which I had said I was convinced that he was winding down the war. 'You're right,' he said. 'You just wait and see.' Then he chatted about a weekend trip to the Bahamas he was planning." White House aides, Sidey finds, are relatively more accessible. "I'm not sure they really approve of me, though. One day this week I was waiting in the White House when John Ehrlichman walked by. 'You're smiling,' he said. 'You'll have to wait and write your column later in the day, when you're scowling.'"

RALPH GRAVES, *Managing Editor*