
BUCK MAY/ One More Time, Mr. President, Since 1921

“Photographers were considered second class citizens before we started the White House News Photographers Association 60 years ago . . . sort of reporters with their brains beaten out,” says Buck May, now 81, when he thinks back to those early years around 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

Andrew J. “BUCK” May has been a shutter snap away from Presidents of the United States most of his life. His entire professional career parallels the rise in respect and mobility of news photographers all over the United States. During these six decades photojournalism has become a major industry as well as a highly valued job.

May is the surviving founder and charter member of the WHNPA, having become in 1935 the first one to be voted a life member. He has served four terms as the WHNPA President, three of those terms consecutively from 1932 through 1934. In addition, he is one of the original fifteen news photographers who met in Atlantic City in 1945 to found the National Press Photographers Association which now has 2,500 members throughout the US and Canada.

His photo career actually began in about 1917 at the Washington Star where he specialized in sports pictures. He served in the Army Signal Corps during World War I and was stationed at the Signal Corps Photography School at Columbia University. After the war he joined the news photographic service of Harris & Ewing for whom he covered the White House. In 1935 he was named Director of their News Service,



became a vice president in 1951 and retired from the company in 1968. One month later he was appointed to the White House Staff as picture and assignment editor, launching the next stage of his photo career with the U.S. presidents at the age of 70. And somewhere in there he managed also to serve 16 years as Washington picture consultant to the Saturday Evening Post.

May has scrapbooks and walls filled with his photos of Presidents and the world around them. But some of the best images are in his mind as he recalls covering all those leaders from Wilson to Ford and his experiences with the WHNPA.

“I’ve been the President and served on about every committee. Even had to worry about the liquor supply for the dinners back during Prohibition. One year Ike

came to the dinner and it was a great evening til he got sick on the food!”

He gives a few brief sketches of some of the Presidents:

“Harding was by far the most photogenic, but Mr. Ford, too, was an equally good subject.”

Truman

He recalls Truman as being down to earth. He was elected honorary president of the elite “One More Club.”

Johnson

LBJ wanted to be photographed only from the right side and would painstakingly check every sheet of contact prints. He called attention to the slightest differences from what he “saw” and what was photographed. However, there were some 250,000 prints of photographs sent to the LBJ Library at the end of the President’s term.

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