

# Book Of Secrets For Presidential Eyes ONLY!

It's a book whose authors apparently never sought to improve its circulation. In fact, there are only five individuals still alive today who have ever peeked inside its pages—or so it is assumed. The select others who have done the same have carried the secrets contained therein to their graves.

Rachel March

“The White House is like a golden cage. It is a splendid mansion, albeit one in which you are constantly on public display.”

This sentiment was expressed by one of the previous presidents. The lack of privacy is a constant affliction for the First Family. A president cannot as much as go out to eat with his family and friends without having his menu chewed over (pun intended), his bill recounted and his choice of dress dissected to pieces. It may seem like there are no secrets left in the White House.

Not so, say some. There are rumors and whisperings about a certain mysterious “book of secrets” that has been passed down throughout the generations from president to successor, originating with George Washington.

The book has remained in its original form, it is claimed. Its data has not been entered into any computer or other technological gadget. It is what it always was—a book, for the president’s perusal only.

## The Mysterious Envelope

At 12 o’clock sharp, on January 20, 2009, Barack Hussein Obama was sworn in as the new president. After a day of ceremonies and celebrations, the new chief arrived at the Oval Office to find a yellow envelope sitting unobtrusively on his desk. Attached was a post-it note scrawled with two digits, “44.” The letter was left there by his predecessor, the 43<sup>rd</sup> President of the United States, George W. Bush.

The letter generated some interest in the media. Reporters tried to glean some information about the letter’s contents, but none was forthcoming. Much speculation ensued: it may have been about the security situation and the threat of terrorism in America. Or perhaps it was about the failing economy and the recession.

Nobody is sure.

There are some, however, who



When newly inaugurated President Obama returned home to the White House after attending a series of festivities, he found a single yellow envelope on his desk in the Oval Office. On an attached post-it note was written the number “44.”



Bill Clinton receiving a classified military report from General Shelton.

suspected – indeed, are certain – that it was nothing less than the legendary “Book of Secrets.”

## Why do Presidents Break Campaign Promises?

It is a phenomenon that we see repeatedly. While on the campaign trail, the presidential candidate makes numerous promises to

enact new laws, abolish certain old ones, do things differently than his predecessor, etc. Yet, after some time in office, many of these promises are broken, altered or neglected. Accusations fly thick and fast: the president has caved in to pressure; he made promises only to win the election; he is ignoring the wishes of his constituents. The critics do not take into account one truth: the view is very different from the top.

President Obama had exactly 78 days to make the transformation from being one out of a hundred senators to being the most powerful man in the world. The day after the election he began an intense series of meetings with the top military brass and security experts. Michael Haden, then the head of the CIA, recalls informing Obama that all operations are authorized by the president. This refers to the presidential office, not the president as an individual. Therefore, all operations are maintained even after the president leaves office, unless the new president specifically issues instructions to alter or cancel such operations.

The deluge of new information the president is subjected to may cause a very dramatic shift in his worldview. It may debunk some of his firmly-held theories and change some of his opinions. He now has access to much more precise and detailed information about everything from security concerns to the economic and financial workings of the government. It is a real eye-opener.

Former espionage officials have reported on reactions by presidents-elect. They all had their moments when they suddenly came face to face with a new reality and regretted some of the promises made on the campaign trail.

When George W. Bush was running for re-election in 2004, his debates with opponent John Kerry on national security were rather heated and intense, in sharp contrast to his debates in 2000 with Al Gore, in which he mostly kept his cool. Clearly, his four years of experience as president had made it impossible for him

to take security issues lightly.

All the preparations a president-elect is subjected to are only a taste of the real thing. The day he becomes POTUS (President of the United States) is the day he will find out things that very few ever knew. And that changes him.

In those cases where the president suddenly dies, this vital information must be immediately passed on to the vice president, who is sworn in right away. A dramatic example is President Roosevelt’s death during World War II. Harry Truman was suddenly and unexpectedly thrust into the role of leading the war effort. The top military and intelligence officials immediately arranged a meeting with their new commander-in-chief.

It was at this meeting that the relatively clueless president was apprised of a newly developed weapon that he had never heard about—the atom bomb. It had the power to almost instantly end the war, albeit at a very hefty price. Literally, hundreds of thousands of civilians would be killed or wounded by this terrible weapon. Truman now had information which completely changed his opinions on how to fight the war. The rest, as they say, is history.

Currently, the president is always accompanied by a military aide carrying a nondescript black briefcase (see *Zman* June



The same three countries—with two new leaders. Soviet dictator Stalin at a conference after World War II with his American and British counterparts. Harry Truman had replaced Roosevelt and Clement Attlee succeeded Winston Churchill.