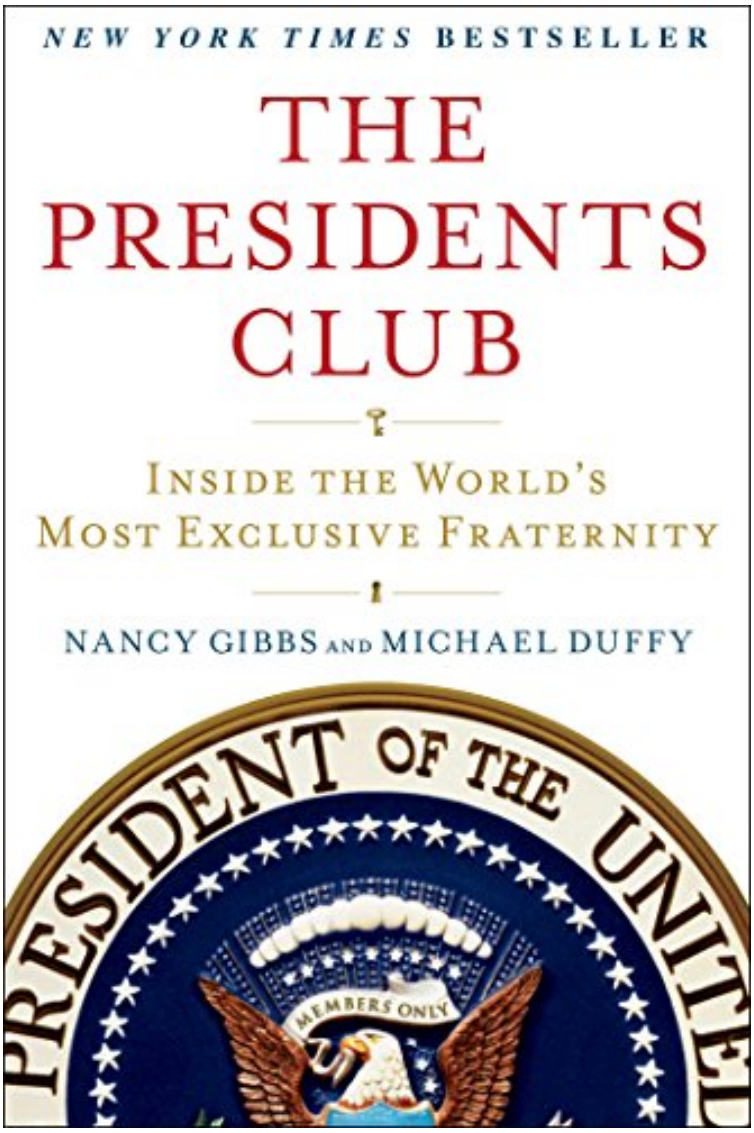
The Presidents Club: Inside the World's Most Exclusive Fraternity (English Edition)



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(Read free ebook) The Presidents Club: Inside the World's Most Exclusive Fraternity (English Edition)

Par Nancy Gibbs, Michael Duffy : The Presidents Club: Inside the World's Most Exclusive Fraternity (English Edition) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Presidents Club: Inside the World's Most Exclusive Fraternity (English Edition):

Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurThe inside story of the world's most exclusivefraternity; how presidents from Hoover through Obama worked with--andsometimes, against--each other when they were in and out of power. ExtraitThe Presidents Club INTRODUCTION So youve come to talk about my predecessors. Bill Clinton greets us in his Harlem office, looking thin, sounding thin, his voice a scrape of welcome at the end of a long day. It is late, it is dark, pouring rain outside, so beyond the wall of windows the city is a splash of watery lights and street noise. But inside, past the two armed agents, behind the electronic locks, the sanctuary is warm wood and deep carpet, a collectors vault. A painting of Churchill watches from the west wall; a stuffed

Kermit the Frog rests on a shelf, while a hunk of an old voting machine, with names attached and levers to pull, sits behind his desk. This is my presidential library, from Washington through Bush, he says, pointing to bookcases full of memoirs and biographies, and in the course of the sance that follows he summons the ghosts not just of Abraham Lincoln and Teddy Roosevelt but Franklin Pierce and Rutherford B. Hayes. He dwells on one president he missesRichard Nixonand another that he loves: George H. W. Bush. A month to the day before he died, he says of Nixon, he wrote me a letter about Russia. And it was so lucid, so well written.... I reread it every year. That one and George Bushs wonderful letter to me, you know where you leave your letter to your successor. That was the letter that said, You will be our President when you read this note.... I am rooting hard for you. Along the windowsill are dozens of pictures; he looks at the signed photo of Lyndon Johnson, a prize given to him forty years ago when he worked on a campaign in Texas. Over time, he predicts of LBJ, history will tend to be kinder to him. In the meantime, it falls to the presidents to be kind to one another. Theres just a general sympathy, he says, among the men who have sat in the Oval Office. President Obama and I didnt talk much about politics when we played golf the other day. There are plenty of other people around a president to talk politics; sometimes you need someone who just makes you laugh. Or tells you not to let the bastards get you down. Clinton was exhausted that day, he recalls, but when my president summons me, then I come and I would play golf in a driving snowstorm. My president, he calls him, which suggests how far the two men have come since their proxy war in 2008. Such are the journeys this book attempts to trace: the intense, intimate, often hostile but more often generous relationships among the once and future presidents. It makes little difference how much they may have fought on the way to the White House; once theyve been in the job, they are bound together by experience, by duty, by ambition, and by scar tissue. They are members of the Presidents Club, scattered across the country but connected by phone and email and sometimes in person, such as when five of them met at the White House after the 2008 election to, as President Carter told us, educate president-elect Obama in a nice way without preaching to him. Throughout its history, the club has never numbered more than six. At the moment, there are branches not just in Washington and New York, but in Atlanta, Dallas, and Kennebunkport, Maine, in a saltbox cottage on the grounds of the Bush family compound. You climb the creaky staircase lined with framed photos so treasured they arent even in the Bush presidential museum. It is here that the elder Bush brought Clinton, the man who had defeated him, to play golf, spend the night, hurdle the waves at breakneck speed. From the moment the two men bonded in 2005, they didnt talk much about politics either, or world affairs or strategy and tactics. It has always been more about fellowship. You are right, President Bush explains in an email. We dont talk about it. You dont have to. No matter the politics, you know and understand the weight of the decisions the other guy had to make, and you respect that. The Presidents Club has its protocols, including deference to the man in the chair and, for the most part, silence about how the members of the worlds most exclusive fraternity get along and the services they provide one another. Harry Truman privately offered to serve as Dwight Eisenhowers vice president if Ike decided to run in 1948; Nixons secret letters to Ronald Reagan in 1980 and 1981 were a virtual blueprint for setting up his White House; Carter promised not to talk to reporters about a mission he undertook for Obama in 2010. When your ambition is slaked, it becomes more important to see something good happen for your country than to just keep winning arguments, Clinton says. At some point, youre just glad when the sun comes up in the morning, you get up and you want something good to happen. I dont think its because we all become saintly. The Presidents Club, like so much else, was founded by George Washington, thanks to the second-best decision he ever made. The first was agreeing to take the office in the first place; but then he chose to leave it, retiring in 1797 after two terms. Which meant that rather than becoming Americas President for Life, he instead became its first former president. Everything Washington did set a precedent: to accept a salary though he didnt need one, so that future presidents would not all need to be rich; to go by Mr. President rather than Your Excellency, so that future presidents might remain grounded; but most of all to relinquish his power peacefully, even prematurely given his immense stature, at that time a striking act of submission to untested democratic principles. With that decision Washington established the Presidents Clubinitially a club of two, once John Adams took office. Faced with the threat of war with France, Adams named the revered Washington commander of the Army, where he served until he died the next year. Adams was the first to discover that, whatever jealousies lingered in private, a former president could be highly useful. He would not be the last. In the two centuries that followed, the clubs ranks rose and fell. It grew to six under Abraham Lincoln, though that was partly because none of his living predecessors had managed to win a second term. The club would not be that large again until Clintons inauguration in 1993, when Nixon, Ford, Carter,

Reagan, and Bush all stood ready to assist. Some presidentsAdams, Jefferson, both Rooseveltshad only one president in reserve. Like Washington, Richard Nixon, upon his reelection in 1972, had none: Harry Truman died just after Christmas, Lyndon Johnson a month later. At that dangerous moment in American history, the club disappeared entirely. So why does this matter? First, because relationships matter, and the private relationships between public men matter in particular ways. For the former presidents, the club can be a vital, sometimes surprising benefit of post-presidential life. They have relinquished power, but not influence; and so their influence becomes a piece of the sitting presidents power. They can do more together than apart, and they all know it; so they join forces as needed, to consult, complain, console, pressure, protect, redeem. As voters we watch the presidents onstage, judge their performance, cheer their successes, cast them out of office for their failures. This is the duty of democracy. But judgment is not the same as understanding, and while what a president does matters most, why he does it is the privilege of history. To the extent that we learn about these men by watching the way they engage with their peersthe loyalty, the rivalry, the pity, and the partnershipsthe club opens a new window into the Oval Office. Second, it matters because the presidency matters, and the club serves to protect the office. Once theyve all sat in the chair, they become jealous of its powers, convinced that however clumsy the other branches of government can be, the president must be able to serve the people and defend the nation when all else fails. They can support whomever they like during campaigns; but once a new president is elected, the others often act as a kind of security detail. Thus did Johnson once present Eisenhower with a pair of gold cuff links bearing the Presidential Seal. You are the only one along with Harry Truman who can legitimately wear these, Johnson observed, but if you look closely, it doesnt say Democrat or Republican on them. These relationships dont just reveal the nature of the presidency; they reflect the forces that have shaped our politics over the last half century. In the docile 1950s, Eisenhower cemented Franklin Roosevelts legacy: a Republican in office for eight years who did not rip up the New Deal effectively endorsed it. By 1968, the country was so divided that Lyndon Johnson fought as fiercely with his vice president, Hubert Humphrey, as with the Republican challenger, Richard Nixon. In ways that tell more important tales, the long, complex, and conflicted relations between Reagan and Nixon or, later, between Reagan and Ford, defined the ideological struggles inside the Republican Party for two generations and counting. In the same way, the complicated relationship between Bill Clinton and Barack Obama mirrors the Democrats generational fight about how best to yank a center-right electorate leftwardor whether it can be done at all. Finally, it matters because the club has become an instrument of presidential power. It is not in the Constitution, not in any book or bylaw, but neither is it a metaphor nor a figure of speech. It is an alliance the former presidents are conscious of building, and the sitting presidents of using, both to promote themselves and to advance their agendas. There is no fraternity like it anywhere, and not just because of the barriers to entry or the privileges of membership. For all of the clubs self-serving habits and instincts, when it is functioning at its best, it can serve the president, help solve his problems, and the nations, even save lives. The Modern Club On January 20, 1953, at the inauguration of Dwight Eisenhower, Truman greeted Herbert Hoover on the platform. I think we ought to organize a former presidents club, Hoover suggested. Fine, Truman replied. You be the President of the club. And I will be the Secretary. Up to that moment, the club was more an idea than an institution. Some sitting presidents consulted with their predecessors, but beyond sharing war stories, there were limits to what a former president could dounless he applied for a new job, like congressman (John Quincy Adams) or Supreme Court justice (William Howard Taft). Calvin Coolidge, shortly before he died in 1933, remarked that People seem to think the presidential machinery should keep on running, even after the power has been turned off. But in our postwar age of global celebrity, presidents live longer, and larger, than ever, and even when the power goes off, their influence remains. Truman was a mortal political enemy of Hoovers, but he also knew that only Hoover had the experience and stature to overhaul the executive branch to meet the challenges of the nuclear age. As a result of their partnership, the Hoover Commission, which Congress created, Truman sanctioned, and Hoover chaired, produced the greatest transformation of the presidency in history: a concentration of power that ultimately yielded the CIA, the National Security Council, the Council of Economic Advisors, the General Services Administration, a unified Defense Department, and much more. Every president who followed would have reason to thank them. Eisenhower, through an act of Congress in 1957, granted the club formal privileges: members received an allowance, office space, mailing rights, a pension. John F. Kennedy, the youngest president in a century, understood the clubs political uses, and he looked for any opportunity to summon his three predecessors back to the White House for the photo op; Johnson discovered its personal uses, seeking both counsel and comfort as he staggered into office in the

wake of a tragedy. I need you more than ever now, Johnson told his old sparring partner Eisenhower on the night of Kennedys murder, and Ike drove to Washington, came to the Oval Office, and wrote out on a legal pad what he thought Johnson should say to an emergency joint session of Congress. Johnson extended all the former presidents Secret Service protection, helicopters, even a projectionist so that if they were being treated at Walter Reed Medical Center, they could watch movies from the White House library. When Truman called to congratulate him on his landslide victory in 1964, Johnson responded like a brother. And I just want you to know, he told Truman, that as long as Im in that office, you are in it, and theres not a privilege of it, or a power of it, or a purpose of it that you cant share. And your bedroom is up there waiting for you, and your plane is standing by your side. A year later, Ikes private advice on how to handle the Vietnam War had become so crucial that Johnson told him youre the best chief of staff Ive got. Nixon, the man who eternally longed to belong, actually created a private clubhouse, a brownstone across the street from the White House, purchased discreetly by the government in 1969 for the use of former presidents. It is still in operation. He and his wife, Pat, organized the first club reunion, researching all the living members of the first families and inviting them to the White House: Calvin Coolidges son, Grover Clevelands grandchildren, various Roosevelts, and dozens of Adamses. Nixon had a particular reason throughout his first term to stroke Johnson; their relationship over the years involved camaraderie, conspiracy, and blackmail. This book will argue that the collapse of the Nixon presidency owed a great deal to his need to protect some secrets only the two club members shared. Nixon in exile had the longest road to redemption of any of them; and so with Reagans election in 1980 he made sure the incoming president understood how valuable a former president could be: President Eisenhower said to me when I visited him at Walter Reed Hospital after the election of 1968, I am yours to command, Nixon told Reagan. I now say the same to you. George H. W. Bush launched a kind of club newsletter, letters stamped SECRET sent to some of his predecessors, and offered each a secure phone line to the Oval Office. After Clinton took over with five former presidents standing by, he came to see how, in the case of Carter and Nixon, he could use them as an arm of his foreign policy, and in the case of Ford, part of his impeachment legal defense team. Clinton understood that being a former president is an asset, his advisor John Podesta observed. But its the current presidents asset to deploy. This story is told chronologically, but that line sometimes needs to bend, because the club has its own life cycle; each president discovers its value in his own time, uses it in his own way. And it is necessary, too, to travel back to understand how the relationships unfolded. The feud that raged in the 1950s between Eisenhower and Truman only makes sense when you understand how closely they had worked together while Ike was still in uniform. Reagans encounters with Nixon began not when Reagan was elected in 1980, but in 1947 when a freshman Republican congressman sat down with a then Democratic movie star to talk about communists in Hollywood; their correspondence stretches across half a century. And of course the tale of the Bushes began forty-three years before either reached the Oval Office. Presidents naturally take a fierce interest in who might one day be joining their fraternityespecially because they have little control over it. They act as talent scouts and bouncers, they test the pledges to see who might have the makings of a brother. The club is a peerage; but future presidents play a part in its evolution, and so those stories sometimes need to be told as well. The Bind That Ties There is no experience you can get, John F. Kennedy admitted after two years in office, that can possibly prepare you adequately for the Presidency. Nor is there any advice, any handbook, since every president enters office determined to turn the page. Kennedy couldnt wait to toss out Ikes military management style for a more supple, activist alternative. They behaved as though history had begun with them, said advisor Clark Clifford of Kennedys men. Ford practiced radical normalcyhis wife even discussed her mastectomyto send the clearest possible signal that the dark age of Nixon was over. Clinton wanted to prove he was not the second coming of Jimmy Carter; George W. Bush was all about not being Clinton; Barack Obama was about not being either one. Each had to learn how much they had to learn, before the club could be of much usebut eventually, they all find themselves reaching out for help. That connection begins the first time you receive the daily intelligence briefing, argues the first President Bush. We all understand the magnitude of the job when we decide to run for President. At least we think we do. But its not possible to fully appreciate the responsibility that comes with being President until you get that first briefing. One senior advisor to three presidents recalls watching the revelation unfold, as talented, confident men realize what theyve gotten themselves into. When you get in, you discover nothing is what you expect, or believed, or have been told, or have campaigned on, he says. Its much more complicated. Your first reaction is: Ive been set up. Second is: I have to think differently. Third is: Maybe they had it right. And it isnt long before they ask, who am I gonna talk to about this? The problems a

president faces, Eisenhower said, are soul-racking.... The nakedness of the battlefield, when the soldier is all alone in the smoke and the clamor and the terror of war, is comparable to the lonelinessat timesof the presidency, when one man must conscientiously, deliberately, prayerfully scrutinize every argument, every proposal, every prediction, every alternative, every probable outcome of his action, and thenall alonemake his decision. All alonebecause just when a new president needs allies, his circle of trust shrinks. No one, with the possible exception of his family, treats him the same, and no one, with the exception of his predecessors, knows what this is like. The sycophants will stand in the rain a week to see you and will treat you like a king, House Speaker Sam Rayburn warned Truman when he took office. Theyll come sliding in and tell you youre the greatest man alivebut you know and I know you aint. Everything a president says, even to his inner circle, is analyzed, interpreted, acted upon; even questions are read as decisions. So he trains himself: no idle comments, no thinking out loud, and grows increasingly guarded; he worries that people only tell him what they think he wants to hear. The Presidency, Kennedy observed, is not a very good place to make new friends. He and his brother Bobby used to imagine a book theyd write one dayThe Poison of the Presidency. But that poison is not something they can talk about; how can you complain about a burden you fought to bear? Thomas Jefferson called the presidency a splendid misery. They face only hard choices and high stakes: the easy decisions never make it to the presidents desk. When Eisenhower was ridiculed for playing so much golf, Truman, no friend of Ikes at the time, defended him: I am sure that the problems of the President follow him around the golf course... and anywhere else he may go. But they bond in the locker room, since they all got into the game, dared greatly, did not remain on the sidelines. If there is a club manifesto, it is Teddy Roosevelts gauntlet, thrown down to all the armchair generals and righteous pundits: It is not the critic who counts, not the one who points out how the strong man stumbled, he argued. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred with sweat and dust and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again... who, if he wins, knows the triumph of high achievement; and who, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly. That also accounts for a regular club refrain, when they refuse to criticize their successors on the grounds that presidents act on informationand bear responsibilitiesthat outsiders cant fathom. No one, Kennedy told historian David Herbert Donald early in 1962, has a right to grade a Presidentnot even poor James Buchananwho has not sat in his chair, examined the mail and information that came across his desk, and learned why he made decisions. Truman and Eisenhower went for a drink together after Kennedys funeral; they talked about how no one ever really understands why presidents make the decisions they do: We know what we did, Truman said. We surely do, Eisenhower agreed. So against all expectation, they all talk to each other: Kennedy had called Eisenhower on the morning he was set to announce the U.S. quarantine of Cuba, which posed a reasonable chance of triggering a nuclear exchange. Only one other man alive really knew what that felt like. No matter what you find that you have to do, Eisenhower told him, I will certainly... do my best to support it. Two years later, once Johnson took over, he would ask Eisenhower to concoct a cover story for why he needed to be in Washington, so he could come by the White House and give Johnson some much-needed guidance, even spend the weekend. Clinton would call Nixon and describe his schedulewhen he got up, when he exercised, how long he worked, in order to hear if that was normal for a president. After Nixon died, Clinton said it felt like the loss of his mother: Just today I had a problem and I said to the person working with me, I wish I could pick up the phone and call Richard Nixon and ask him what he thinks we ought to do about this. When they cant talk to each other, they study each other. Every president may enter office promising a new day, a new deal, a new frontier. But they all inherit the successes and the failures of the men who came before. The things that Jerry Ford decided when he was in office affected me daily, Carter said. Even the things that Harry Truman decided 30 years before I went into office affected me daily. Nixon could tell you every detail about many of his predecessorswho took sleeping pills, who had hemorrhoids. Obama quizzed Reagans team about how he managed to stay focused on the horizon and not get pulled down into the weedsand whether he got discouraged and how he kept the public from seeing it. These are men who have worked at the same desks, slept in the same beds, shaved in the same mirrors, raised their children in the same backyard. When they return to the White House to visit, they check out how the new tenant redecorated. But they all know that in fact the man does not remake the presidency. Its the other way around. A few weeks after his reelection in 2004, George W. Bush sat in the Oval Office beside a Christmas tree flocked with eagles, with an air of equanimity you might expect from a president who had just won reelection despite an unpopular war, an economy on tiptoes, and a public conflicted about many issues but most of all about him. He was asked whether he thought more or less highly of his predecessors,

now that hed been in the job awhile. Of my predecessors? Very interesting, he replied, and then, without hesitation, More highly of them all. Why? Because Ive got a much better appreciation of what theyve been through. That included even Clinton, with whom he went on to form the next club alliance. There is no conversation so sweet as that of former political enemies, Truman observed. It was the scars of war and scandal, says an official who worked for both Clinton and Bush, that enabled such natural adversaries to become friends. Both men went through impossible circumstances and they both came out with a lot of scar tissue and so they both have to be asking themselves, how do I find peace in my life? Ive been through a meat grinder; maybe a friendship with a person who has been through something like this could bring me to a different place as a human being; it detaches me from the old and gets me to a new place. Its just a way of finding peace. But I cant find peace with a lot of people because so few are my equal. Or as Jimmy Carter puts it, We always have sorrows. The Other Secret Service The club has an operational wing, whose use depends on the needs of the president and the skills of predecessors. Truman sent Hoover to twenty-two countries in fifty-seven days in 1946 trying to prevent a postwar humanitarian crisis. Reagan conspired with Nixon when he traveled to the Soviet Union to weigh Mikhail Gorbachevs true intentions. Bush 41 tapped Ford and Carter to monitor the elections in Panama in 1989. Obama dispatched Clinton to North Korea to win the release of two jailed American journalists. On such missions the stakes can be high, as are the risks. They have a power because of their position thats unique, observes President Bush 41s advisor Brent Scowcroft of the former presidents. But its dangerous to use them because, not unreasonably, they think that they know much more than we do. Some members proved both immensely useful and infuriatingly mutinous, as Carter did when he undertook a mission to North Korea in 1994 at Clintons behest. His brief was clear: deliver a message and bring back intelligence about Kim Il Sungs nuclear intentions. Instead he brokered a deal to forestall a crisiswhich he announced on CNN. White House officials, gathered around a television in the West Wing, did not try to contain their fury; one cabinet member called Carter a treasonous prick. Carter was not unusual in wanting to experience one more time the rush of power, and believing he was uniquely positioned to help. Many leave office with agendas more complex than those they brought in, which play out in the books they write, the foundations they lead, but also the advice they offer. Thats the crucible in which the club does both its best work and its worst. A sitting president lends them a halo, a script, an airplane; they can serve the country, or serve themselves. No one who has been in the Presidency with the capacity and power to affect the course of events can ever be satisfied with not being there, Nixon said years after he stepped down, and so they may insert themselves into events whether the sitting president invites them or not. Nixon promised Ford hed stay out of sight in 1976and then went prancing around China in the middle of the New Hampshire primary that year. Carter and Ford presented George Bush with a proposal to raise taxes just a few weeks after hed been elected on a promise not to. Bush did not appreciate Carter secretly lobbying the U.N. Security Council against the Gulf War. Sometimes a former president is best neither seen nor heard. This is the clubs constant tension: among its crucial services is the repair of ragged reputations. When former presidents, like Nixon or Carter, do this at the sitting presidents expense, all hell breaks loose. But members more often conspire than collide. They extol each other at library dedications. They exalt each other in eulogies. They line up together with fat bristle brushes to whitewash the stains on their records. Go to WhiteHouse.gov and read the presidential biographies; they are feather soft and heartily heroic, valentines straight from the Oval Office. Under Bill Clinton, the U.S. enjoyed more peace and economic well being than at any time in its history. He got into trouble over his indiscretions with a young White House intern, but apologized to the nation for his actions and continued to have unprecedented popular approval ratings for his job as president. George W. Bush cut taxes for every federal income taxpayer... modernized Medicare... empowered Americas armies of compassion... built global coalitions to remove violent regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq that threatened America; liberating more than 50 million people from tyranny. You can view the work of rehabilitation as purely self-interested: they all compete for historys favor. But they may also defend each other, not out of sympathy or affection, but because the club functions as the protective arm of the presidency itself. That role sharpens their advice, mostly ensures their silence, and offers the promise of a gentling redemption they will need someday, too. It is a shadow Secret Service, patrolling the power and privilege of an office that its members think America needs now more than ever. Sometimes burnishing a legacy serves to bolster the institution, so that presidents like Truman who were reviled in office are revered in retrospect, and everyone wins. Club members do not want to see the president look bad, no matter who it is. But the clubs most secret handshakes are less about membership than stewardship. In 1960, after one of the closest elections in history, both Hoover and

Eisenhower quietly told Nixon not to contest the results, even as rumors spread of Chicago precincts where machines registered 121 votes from 43 voters. It was not because they wanted to see Kennedy in the White House; it was to protect the presidency from a crisis of legitimacy. I think we are in enough trouble in the world today, Hoover told Nixon. Some indications of national unity are not only desirable but essential. When Kennedy and then Johnson came under fire for foreign policy decisions, Eisenhower stared down his fellow Republicans: at a time of crisis, he said, there is only one thing a good American can do, and that is support the president. Ford pardoned Nixon not to save the man but to restore the office and let the country move on; he lost the next election, but forever defended the choice. It fell to the Kennedys twenty-seven years later to give Ford a Profile in Courage Award, the family of one president symbolically pardoning another for deciding to pardon a third. We want you to succeed, George W. Bush told Obama after the 2008 election. All of us who have served in this office understand that the office transcends the individual. When the political culture is splintered and siloed, the president alone serves all the people. The sight of the presidents meeting in the Oval Office after a tough election, or hitting the road together to do hurricane relief, the sight of them standing side by side, old enemies reconciled, can offer a rare moment of truce when politics is turned off and the common good wins out over personal pride or public ambition. When Bill Clinton and George H. W. Bush began working together raising relief money for disaster victims, they knew their buddy movie ran completely against the bitter grain of the times; that was partly why they delighted in doing it. Americans like politics, Clinton said. They like us to air our differences, because they know we have got to have an honest debate to come to a good answer. But then they also think that debate ought to have limits to it. For too long, politicians did not just disagree with opponents: they despised and demonized them, he observed, and the country suffered for it. It keeps us from solving a lot of problems and doing a lot of things that we could have done otherwise. So I think people see George and me and they say, That is the way our country ought to work. So just how crucial is the club in the early twenty-first century? In every age, three factors determine its performance: the needs and choices of the sitting president, the needs and talents of the former presidents, and a climate that welcomes or deplores their partnership. It was no accident that the clubs founders had all three factors in their favor. Hoover and Truman showed just how much good they could do, through an alliance that was as productive as it was unexpected. Much about the country, and the world, was broken in 1945: neither the Congress, the parties, the press, nor the public was going to throw up much resistance to two men so resolutely committed to fixing it. That episode, while formative, was also unusual. Under Eisenhower, the club lost much of its clout; in that case, the president simply didnt feel the need. Later presidents would feel the need but lack the resource; there was not much help Nixon could offer Gerald Ford, other than to remain as quiet as possible. But the club has proven over time that it is a force in itself, able to change the course of history by bringing out the best and the worst in its members. Back in the beginning, when the club was born, the very idea that it would exert its own power was so outlandish that even the two presidents who started it were wrong about how it would all turn out.Revue de presseThis is essential reading for anyone interested in American politics. Robert Dallek, bestselling author of An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy, 19171963Forget Romes Curia, Yales Skull and Bones and the Bilderbergsthe worlds most exclusive club never numbers more than six. . . . Michael Duffy and Nancy Gibbs have penetrated thick walls of secrecy and decorum to give us the most intimate, revealing, and poignant account of the constitutional fifth wheel that is the ex-presidency. Readers are in for some major surprises, not to mention a history they wont be able to put down. Richard Norton Smith, author of Patriarch: George Washington and the New American NationThe Presidents Club is magnetically readable, bursting with new information and behind-the-scenes details. It is also an important contribution to history, illuminating the event-making private relationships among our ex-Presidents and why we should do a far better job of drawing on their skills and experience. Michael Beschloss, bestselling author of The ConquerersNancy Gibbs and Michael Duffy have given us a great gift: a deeply reported, highly original, and wonderfully written exploration of a much-overlooked part of American history. The tiny world of U.S. presidents is our Olympus, and Gibbs and Duffy have chronicled the intimacies and rivalries of the gods. Jon Meacham, bestselling author of American Lion: Andrew Jackson in the White HouseMichael Duffy and Nancy Gibbs have taken us inside one of the most powerful and unusual families in American lifethe brotherhood of former presidents of the United States. Political junkies, historians, psychologists and main street citizens will find the tales of friendship, envy, conspiracy, competition and common cause irresistible. Tom Brokaw, bestselling author of The Greatest GenerationThis is a brilliant idea for a book, wonderfully written! At Eisenhowers inauguration, Hoover and Truman half-jokingly decided to form a Presidents Club.

With surprising reporting and insights, this book reveals the relationships and rivalries among the few men who know what its like to be president. It gives a new angle on history by exploring the essence of the presidency. Walter Isaacson, bestselling author of Steve Jobs and Benjamin FranklinMichael Duffy and Nancy Gibbs offer more than a fresh and fascinating first look at the worlds most exclusive mens club. Its a book of real substance about clashing egos and strange bedfellows at the top. Jonathan Alter, bestselling author of The PromiseThe Presidents Club is a lucid and well-written glimpse into the modern presidency and its self-sustaining shadow organization. It's worth reading and rereading for its behind-the-scenes insights. USA TodayThis is a great scoop . . . Amazing. Chris Matthews, NBC A fabulous book . . . I absolutely love it. Greta Van Susteren, FOX NewsThis is . . . the historical version of crack. Joe Scarborough, MSNBCFascinating! Brooke Baldwin, CNN It is a fascinating read, and I cant put the book down. Clayton Morris, FOX NewsCan I download it at midnight tonight? . . . I love this book, I love that somebody tackled it. Chuck Todd, MSNBCThis is a compelling look at how these men set aside their differences to shape policy and history. Entertainment WeeklyA lively history of the crisscrossing personal relationships among Americas post-World War II presidents. The Washington PostWith their knowledge of the territory of presidential politics and personality, Gibbs and Duffy assemble a compelling account . . . [and] show that collisions of ego, personality and politics can often result in creation, not destruction. Kirkus s (starred)With research in presidential papers and the published record, this is a fascinating and fun read that will appeal to political junkies and history buffs alike. Highly recommended. Library Journal