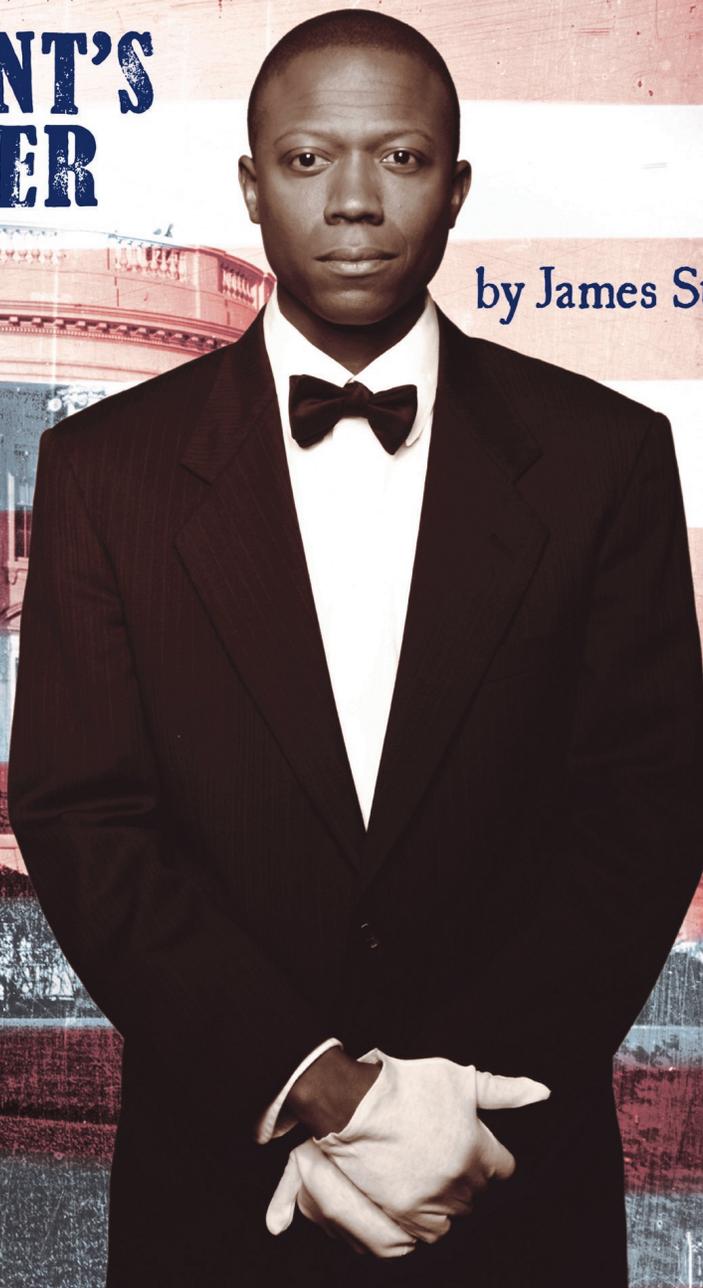


LOOKING OVER ★ ★ THE ★ ★ PRESIDENT'S SHOULDER

by James Still



AMERICAN
BLUES
THEATER



CELEBRATING
30
YEARS

BACKSTAGE GUIDE

A publication of **COMMUNITY SERVICE** at
AMERICAN BLUES THEATER

BACKSTAGE CALLBOARD

LOOKING OVER THE PRESIDENT'S SHOULDER

Written by James Still*

Directed by Timothy Douglas



Manny Buckley*
as Alonzo Fields

Before Lee Daniels' "The Butler", Emmy Award winning writer James Still wrote the real-life story of Alonzo Fields, the grandson of a freed slave, who was forced by the Depression to give up his dreams of becoming an opera singer. Fields accepted the job at the White House and served 21 years for four U.S. presidents and their families: Herbert Hoover, Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and Dwight Eisenhower.

** Ensemble member or Artistic Affiliate of American Blues Theater*

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BACKSTAGE Contributors

Elyse Dolan
Assistant Producer
American Blues Theater

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Assistant Director
Looking Over the President’s Shoulder



NOTES FROM PRODUCING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR **GWENDOLYN WHITESIDE** & PLAYWRIGHT **JAMES STILL**

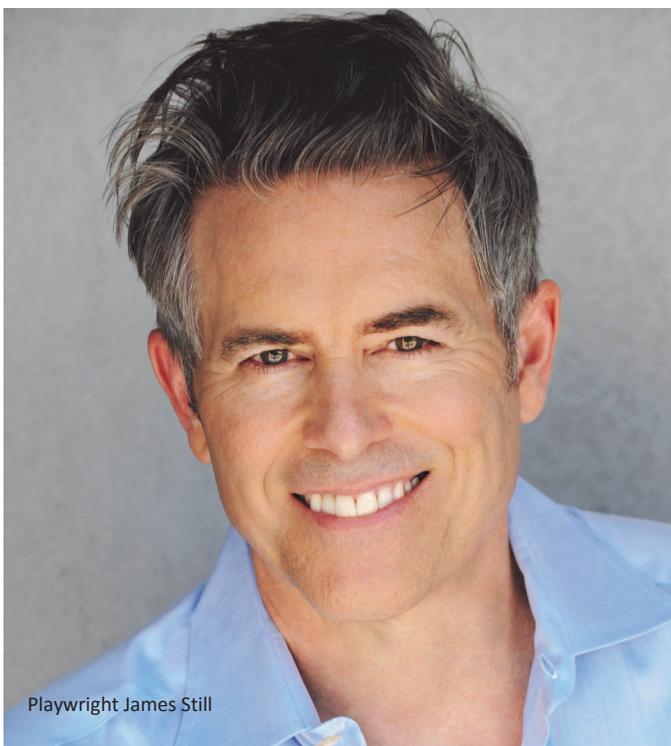
Welcome to American Blues Theater's 30th anniversary season "Seeing is Believing". To date, our theater has operated and created art through five presidencies: Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama. During the run of this production, the 2016 presidential primaries will shape the November election. In a year from now, the new president will move into the chief executive's residence. This president will set his or her policy goals and vision. Our country and world will acclimatize to this new standard. The White House domestic staff will undertake an additional charge – to adapt more familiarly to another president's personal preferences.

Imagine bearing witness to the internal secret workings of the White House for decades. Now imagine living those years as an African American *before* civil rights. Alonzo Fields was the first African American to be promoted to chief butler. He wrote in his book *My 21 Years in the White House*: "Boys, remember that we are helping to make history. We have a small part...but they can't do much here without us."

We proudly share his story with Chicago. As Mr. Fields' niece Loretta Fields told *The Indianapolis Star*: "I look at him as a trailblazer. He paved the way to other opportunities." ●



Producing Artistic Director
Gwendolyn Whiteside



Playwright James Still

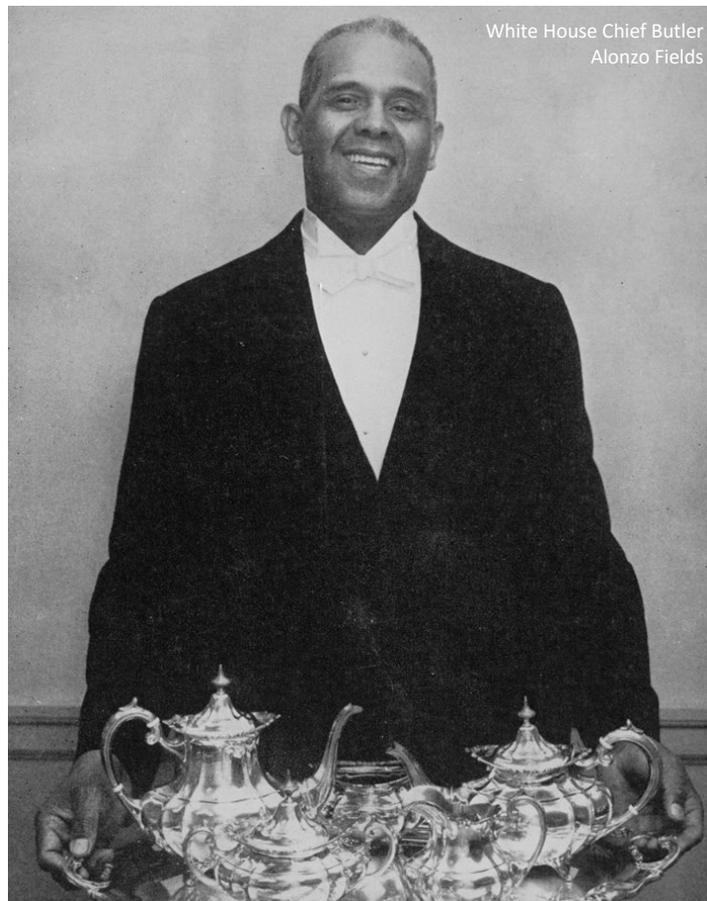
LOOKING OVER THE PRESIDENT'S SHOULDER is a one-person play. Why? It was my instinct from the beginning to write this play for one actor. There is something intimate and exhilarating and shared about watching one character tell his or her story. As an audience, we feel close to that character, we feel as though we've been cast as his confidant, we feel essential to the experience. We're here to hear a story. And on a technical level, there is something dangerous and thrilling about watching one actor bravely inhabit the stage for 90 minutes. But secretly, there was more to it than that.

As the chief butler in the White House, Alonzo Fields was required to be silent, to stare straight ahead, not to smile or acknowledge any of the conversations taking place. As an African American in the White House from 1931 to 1953, he stood behind four presidents as the country struggled with its complicated history of racism and classism. I remember feeling there was something perfectly subversive and bold about a one-man play whose character hadn't been allowed to talk on the job. Finally, Alonzo Fields would get to tell his story. Through the years and the play's many productions, I've also discovered there were many audiences who have wanted to hear his story.

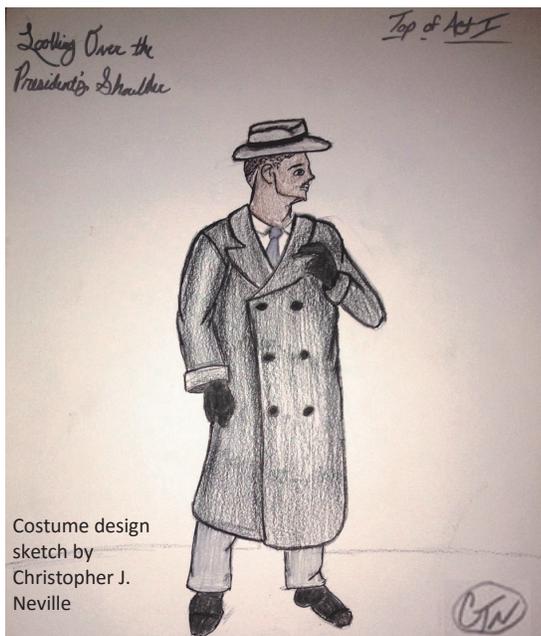
“He really was ‘in the front row watching the passing parade of history...,’” James Still quotes Fields.

If you’re like me, you might never have heard of Alonzo Fields. I first ran across his name in 1999 while doing research on another project. It was the beginning of my fascination and obsession with Alonzo Fields. Soon I was making phone calls to the Harry S. Truman Library in Independence, Missouri, to the White House, and the Smithsonian. I would travel to Boston and spend time with Alonzo Fields’ second wife, Mayland (who is still living). I would travel to Washington, D.C. and talk to White House staff, spend time in the White House kitchen, the butler’s pantry, and walk up and down the back stairs. I would also walk across Pennsylvania Avenue, sit on a park bench, and look back at the White House — just as Alonzo Fields does in the play. Many years and many productions later, with the American Blues production I’m reminded anew what a wonderful man Fields was, what a complicated moment in history he shares with us, and what a unique role he played. He really was “in the front row watching the passing parade of history...”

Alonzo Fields died in 1994, so I’ll never know what he might have thought about the play and all the attention he’s gotten through the many actors who have played him. If he were here, there are things I’d love to ask him. But mostly I’d want to say thank you. Thank you for teaching me about living a life with grace and elegance, about doing a job with a sense of purpose and pride, and about being an artist who served dinner to four presidents and their families — but served his country too. ●



White House Chief Butler
Alonzo Fields



Costume design
sketch by
Christopher J.
Neville



President Truman's
family dining room

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR TIMOTHY DOUGLAS

Assistant Producer Elyse Dolan discusses *Looking Over the President's Shoulder* with Director Timothy Douglas.

What initially intrigued you about this play and Alonzo Fields' story?

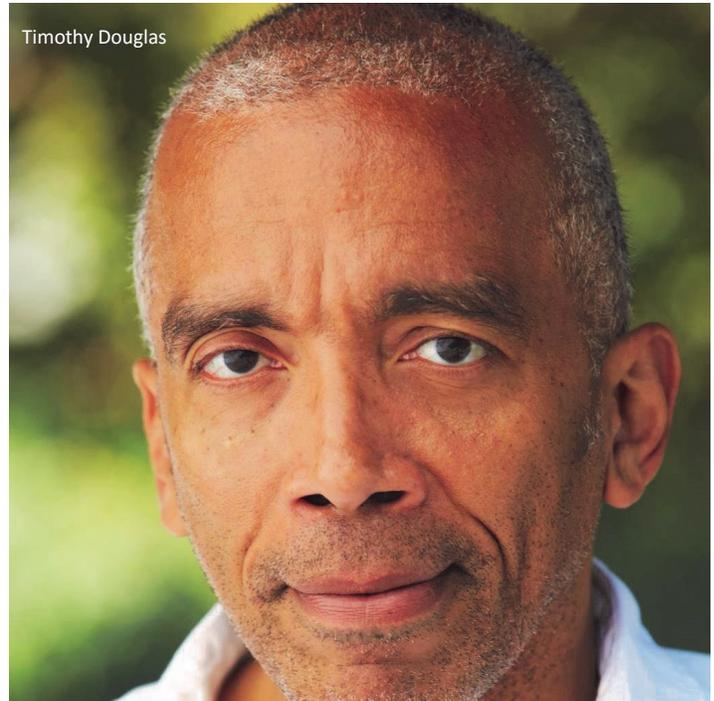
Alonzo Fields has a fascinating history. He was at the right hand of major world leaders through four presidencies, a world war, the Depression, the Korean war, and more. At the same time, he was a supportive husband and father, he was a dutiful son, he held onto a job that would definitely be considered high-stress today, and he pursued music as a gifted vocalist. But as a young African American man living before the Civil Rights movement, he had his share of barriers. He ultimately found a way to practice art within the constraints of the society he lived in, and his voice is an exceedingly important one.

In what ways is directing a solo show different than directing a show with a large cast? In what ways is it the same?

It's a very different beast! In some ways, it's easier since there are fewer individual elements to track. In other ways it's more challenging than directing a production with more actors in it, as there are at least more sounding boards to bounce ideas off of one another. The dynamic of one actor/one director demands a more surgery-like precision during the rehearsal process, and as a result the inevitable missteps (which are par for the course in putting together any production) are far less forgiving. Being said, I've had such a wonderful experience with Manny. As I watch the nuances of this performance, I am confident in James' Still's vision that a solo actor is exactly what this story needs. Even though we hear many different voices and stories throughout the play, they are beautifully channeled through Field's experience.

What themes of this play do you think will resonate with audiences most?

Although the historic events of the play are all true, of particular interest is the voice that Alonso gives to his perspective on the institutionalized prejudices enacted upon Black Americans for generations. And while Still's play relays this branch of man's inhumanity tempered by way of Alonso's humanistic nature, it still offers a stark reminder of the adage "the more that things change, the more they stay the same" - something that Chicagoans in particular will surely resonate. Being said, the journey "over the president's shoulder" continues to resonate with an indelible hope for the future.



Timothy Douglas

Had you worked with James Still previously? Can you talk a little about your collaboration with him on this play?

I met James many years ago, and when the time came for me to premiere one of his earlier plays, I was unexpectedly "stolen away" for another career-making project (with James' blessing) which was a direct conflict. So when American Blues Theater was considering the play for their season, and he'd suggested that they invite me to direct, I leapt at the opportunity so long in the making. James has been an open, supportive artist throughout the process. He's been a great resource and collaborator, and inspires the deep investment we all have in this remarkable story and play.

What projects will you be working on next?

Suzan Lori-Parks' *Father Comes Home from the Wars* which runs through February 21 at the Roundhouse Theatre in D.C. Then I direct Terrence McNally's *Mothers and Sons* at Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, where I am an Associate Artist. Then I end the spring back in D.C. directing *Disgraced* at Arena Theatre. It's going to be a great season, and I'm glad that I got to spend part of it in Chicago - my theatre home away from home - along with the team at American Blues Theater. ●

INTERVIEW WITH ACTOR MANNY BUCKLEY

Assistant Producer Elyse Dolan discusses *Looking Over the President's Shoulder* with solo performer Manny Buckley.

What aspects of Alonzo Fields' story resonate with you?

Alonzo Fields had every intention of becoming an opera singer early in his career. He never intended to become a butler. It sounds trite, but life is what happens when you're busy making plans, I suppose. In fact, he became a butler because he thought it would help him in his career as an artist—and he needed the money to provide for his family.

I think anyone who is an artist of any kind, myself included, can relate to that. When you set out on a career path as an artist, your primary focus, at least you tell yourself, is on the art. Meanwhile, you have to make a living to put food on the table and pay the mortgage. A lot of actors, for example—again myself included—have waited tables, tended bar, and done temp work. However, that notion of missed career opportunities like I believe Alonzo Fields has, certainly isn't limited to just artists and actors specifically. It's human nature to think "what if I had done things differently?"

Were you intimidated to take on a one-man show? What has been the most challenging aspect of doing a solo show? The most thrilling?

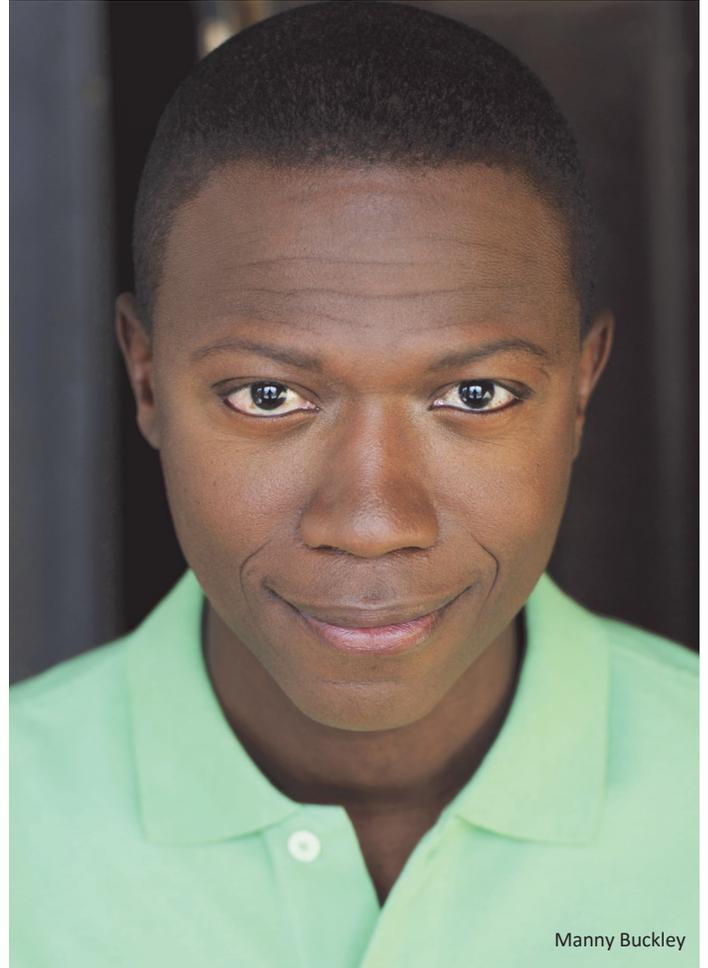
I wasn't intimidated by taking on a one-man show. I probably should have been, I'm sure. I'm always excited about doing a show audiences haven't seen before. This is the first time *Looking Over the President's Shoulder* has been produced in Chicago. I'm thrilled to be the first to do it.

This is the first solo show I have performed, but not the first I've read, of course. Compared to the other shows I've read, I imagine the most challenging aspect of doing *Looking Over the President's Shoulder* are getting all the historical facts right—there are a lot of them. I mean: a lot! Also, I've never even spoken any German, let alone sang in German.

The most thrilling part of *Looking Over the President's Shoulder* is sharing Alonzo Fields' story. He has the prestige of being the first African American chief butler of the White House. I feel privileged to be able to tell his story.

I'm sure you've learned a lot about American history while creating this show, did you learn anything that surprised you?

Some of the personal things about each president and first lady were surprising. There are some controversial things involving race and religion that Alonzo mentions that, even in historical context, aren't so different from today. In the play he reflects on



Manny Buckley

social and political issues from, say, over 70 years ago that speak directly to what's happening now. I would like to think we've progressed further, but I question whether we have.

Alonzo Fields has stated that his favorite president was Truman. Do you have a personal favorite president?

As a kid, I remember my favorite president was Teddy Roosevelt. He seemed so rugged and tough. Speak softly and carry a big stick, and all. Teddy Roosevelt was such a character. I mean, the teddy bear is even attributed to being named after him.

As an adult now, though, I have to say it's Barack Obama. He's been responsible for making some great changes in the United States' economy and diplomacy. He's the first and only sitting American president to be awarded two Nobel Peace Prizes. ●

ABOUT ALONZO FIELDS

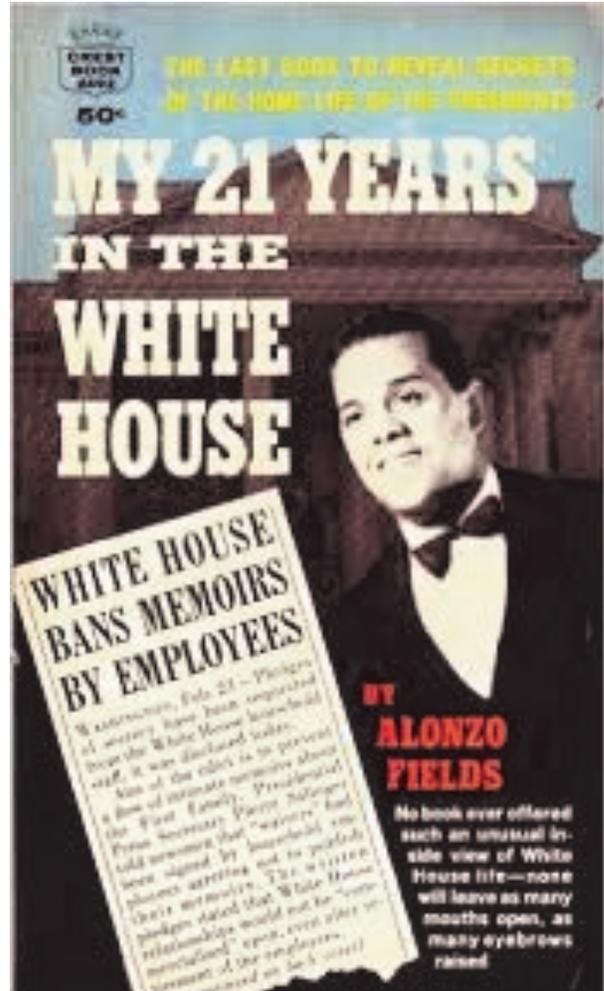
Alonzo Fields was born in Lyles Station, Indiana, a small, all-black community about 120 miles east of St. Louis, Missouri. His father owned the local general store, directed a brass band (all black) that played for local events, and eventually worked in Washington, D. C. as a janitor for the Post Office Department. Alonzo's mother contributed to the family income by running a boarding house for railroad workers. From his dad, Alonzo learned much about what would become a life-long passion—music.

Like his father, Alonzo played in a brass band and taught others to play brass instruments. Alonzo had a beautiful singing voice that was praised by his teachers. His goal of achieving success as a concert singer seemed certain until money for continuing his education ran out. With a wife and child to support, he took a position as a butler at the White House in 1931. Instead of the job being a temporary as he planned, Alonzo found White House employment suited him. He eventually would be promoted to the position of Chief Butler.

He wrote a book, *My 21 Years in the White House*, detailing his experiences of working for four presidents and their families. Alonzo knew that his job gave him the chance to see history being made every day so he kept a journal. He did not want to forget the events he worked and the people he met. He also saved some souvenirs from important functions he planned or was invited to attend. In his journal he recorded his personal observations of the presidents and their families, and the important visitors he served, and in some cases, conversed with.

His position brought him into close contact with important people like Winston Churchill, Princess Elizabeth of England, Thomas Edison, John D. Rockefeller, not to mention the presidential cabinet members, senators, representatives, and Supreme Court Justices. He was witness to presidential decision-making at critical times in our history—the attack on Pearl Harbor, the death of Franklin Roosevelt, the desegregation of the military, and the outbreak of hostilities in Korea.

The job of chief butler meant that Fields was responsible for keeping track of all White House tablecloths, napkins, silverware, glassware, and china. Also, he made menu suggestions for important state dinners, receptions, teas, and family dinners to be approved by the First Lady. He supervised the chefs and servers. He had to be prepared to serve many people with little advance notice. He had to learn what would and would not please each president and his family.



Alonzo appreciated that he was seeing America's history up-close and firsthand. As he often told his staff, "... remember that we are helping to make history. We have a small part, ...but they can't do much here without us. They've got to eat, you know."

Alonzo Fields left White House service in February 1953. He lived to be 94 years of age. ●

(from Truman Library archives)

SELECTED PAGES FROM ALONZO FIELDS' PERSONAL PAPERS

“On Saturday, June 24, 1950, while enjoying a family weekend in Independence, Missouri, President Harry S. Truman learned that North Korea had invaded South Korea. The next day, he flew back to Washington, D.C., and called an emergency meeting of senior officials to be held at Blair House that evening. (Blair House was the President’s official residence while the White House was undergoing renovation.)

The President’s emergency meeting precipitated a crisis for another leader in the nation’s capital, Alonzo Fields, Chief Butler at the White House, who also had been enjoying the afternoon off; with the President and First Family out of town, Fields had dismissed the White House kitchen staff until Monday morning. At 4 p.m., Fields received a call from the White House usher, informing him that fourteen of the President’s senior advisors would soon assemble at Blair House for dinner. The guests would arrive for cocktails and hors d’oeuvres at 8 p.m. and dinner would be served at 8:30 p.m., when the President was expected to arrive.

Fields sprang into action. Marshaling his forces with the help of Washington, DC, police who located two of the White House cooks, he headed to Blair House, composing along the way a menu based on his recollection of the food supplies on hand. The butler who was to help Fields serve the meal arrived only five minutes before the guests.”

(from www.archives.gov)

Sunday, June 25, 1950 was like so many days in June in Washington, hot and muggy. President Truman was away in Independence for a long week end. Mrs. Truman always left early in June for Independence. With the President being away. I closed the kitchen for the week end, with orders for all kitchen help and butlers to check in with me at noon Sunday, then I should know if the President would be returning. So at noon Sunday, I cleared everyone until breakfast call Monday, June 26 1950.

At about 4: P.M. Sunday, June 25, Mr. Claunch, the usher on duty called me excitedly saying that the President was returning and wanted cocktails and dinner at 8:00 P.M. for the Sec. of State and the Army, Navy and Airforce chiefs of Staffs, and for me not to wait on him, but to start serving the guest cocktails upon their arrivals. He was not sure how many to expect, perhaps 18 or 20. I suggested to Mr. Claunch, if possible to have radio and police calls made to summon the help to report to the White House. I planned dinner in the cab on my way to the White House, in respect to the supplies I had on hand.. I cooked, set the table, made canapes for cocktails, until the first cook arrive at 6:00 P.M. which gave me leave to continue setting the table. My first butler arrived at 7:45 and the guest started to arrive 7:50. Secretary Acheson and General Omar Bradley were the first to arrive. The President arrived at 8:30 and we proceeded with the dinner that started the conference in making the decision to take police action in Korea.



Sunday
June 25
1950

Dinner

Korean War
18 @ 8:30 P.M.

Brandied Fruit Cup

Fried Breast of Chicken
 Currant Jelly
 Cream Gravy
Shoestring Potatoes
Buttered Asparagus
Scalloped Tomatoes
Hot Biscuits

Hearts of Lettuce
Russian Dressing

Vanilla Ice Cream
Chocolate Sauce
Cup Cakes



FACTS ABOUT THE FOUR PRESIDENTS SERVED BY ALONZO FIELDS

President Herbert Hoover

- Herbert Hoover had one brother, Theodore, who was 3 ^{1/2} years older, and one sister, Mary (called May) who was 2 years younger.
- Herbert Hoover was 5 feet 11 inches tall.
- Herbert Hoover was tendered 87 honorary degrees, which may have been a world record during his lifetime.
- Herbert Hoover was nominated five times for the Nobel Peace Prize - in 1921, 1933, 1941, 1946, and 1964.
- There are currently 53 schools in the United States, 1 in Germany, and 1 in Poland named for Herbert Hoover.
- There are two asteroids named for Herbert Hoover, Hooveria (discovered 1920) and Herberta (discovered 1935).
- Herbert Hoover became an orphan at the age of nine when his mother died in February, 1884. His father had died in December, 1880. Herbert was raised by relatives in Iowa and Oregon.
- Herbert Hoover was one of the very first students at Leland Stanford, Jr. University, graduating as a member of the "Pioneer" class of 1895 with a bachelor's degree in geology.
- Herbert Hoover served as Secretary of Commerce from March 5, 1921 to August 21, 1928, when he resigned to run for President. To date, he is the longest serving Commerce Secretary in U. S. history.
- Herbert Hoover was the first President to have a telephone on his desk in the Oval Office.



(from hooverassociation.org)

President Franklin D. Roosevelt

- Franklin Delano Roosevelt was born on January 30, 1882, at the family home in Hyde Park, New York.
- He was 6 feet 2 inches tall and weighed approximately 182 lbs.
- FDR was the only child of James Roosevelt and his second wife, Sara Delano. Franklin had an older half brother, James Roosevelt Roosevelt (1854-1927), born to his father and his first wife, Rebecca Howland, who died in 1876.
- In the autumn of 1907 Franklin became an apprentice lawyer with the Wall Street firm of Carter, Ledyard and Milburn. It was a typical arrangement at the time—no salary the first year and then a small one to start.
- On August 10, 1921, FDR developed acute symptoms of poliomyelitis while visiting his summer home on Campobello Island in New Brunswick, Canada. He was thirty-nine years old.
- FDR was elected Governor of New York State in 1928 and 1930 for two two-year terms.
- Stamp collecting was one of FDR's lifelong hobbies. His interest began when he was eight years old and his mother passed her collection on to him.
- His favorite authors were Rudyard Kipling, Charles Dickens, and Mark Twain.
- FDR always referred to himself as a tree farmer. The Tulip Poplar was FDR's favorite tree. There is a stand of tulip poplars just south of the Library.



(from fdrlibrary.marist.edu)

FACTS ABOUT THE FOUR PRESIDENTS SERVED BY ALONZO FIELDS

President Harry Truman

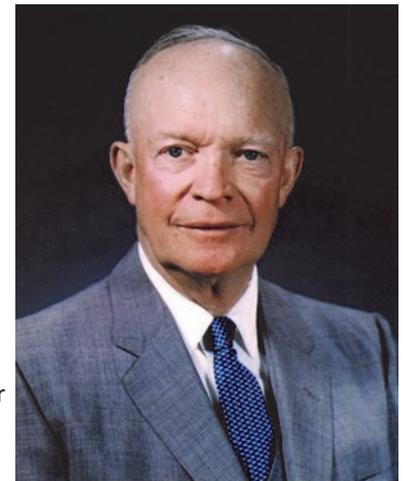
- Truman was born in Lamar, Missouri in 1884. He grew up in Independence, and for 12 years prospered as a Missouri farmer.
- During his few weeks as Vice President, Harry S. Truman scarcely saw President Roosevelt, and received no briefing on the development of the atomic bomb or the unfolding difficulties with Soviet Russia. Suddenly these and a host of other wartime problems became Truman's to solve when, on April 12, 1945, he became President. He told reporters, "I felt like the moon, the stars, and all the planets had fallen on me."
- He went to France during World War I as a captain in the Field Artillery. Returning, he married Elizabeth Virginia Wallace, and opened a haberdashery in Kansas City.
- In June 1945 Truman witnessed the signing of the charter of the United Nations, hopefully established to preserve peace.
- A long, discouraging struggle ensued as U.N. forces held a line above the old boundary of South Korea. Truman kept the war a limited one, rather than risk a major conflict with China and perhaps Russia.



(from whitehouse.gov)

President Dwight Eisenhower

- Born on October 14, 1890, Eisenhower came from humble roots, progressed steadily through the military, and assumed the top military and political posts in the United States.
- In 1911, he earned an appointment to West Point, where he played football and was an average student.
- Eisenhower started advocating for the use of tanks in modern warfare in the early 1920s. His superiors, who supported infantry warfare, weren't happy with Ike.
- Eisenhower opposed using nuclear weapons on Japan. He believed that a Japanese surrender was imminent in the summer of 1945. President Harry Truman, with access to other opinions and information, decided otherwise.
- He was a reluctant presidential candidate. Eisenhower was asked by both parties to run for the White House in 1948, since he didn't have a declared political party membership.
- Eisenhower was never seriously challenged in two presidential campaigns. In 1952 and 1956, he easily defeated Democratic challenger Adlai Stevenson. However, in 1956, the Democrats grabbed control of the House and Senate, as Ike's popularity didn't transfer to other Republicans.
- President Eisenhower's administration saw the addition of Alaska and Hawaii as states, a massive build-out of the nation's highway system, and the creation of NASA.



(from constitutioncenter.org)

SELECTIONS FROM "AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE WHITE HOUSE"

Selections from "African Americans and the White House" by the White House Historical Association

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT SPEAKS OUT

As soon as she became first lady in 1933, Eleanor Roosevelt let the country know that she believed that racism was wrong, and that she would work to improve the life of African Americans. A few days after moving into the White House, Mrs. Roosevelt announced that she would only hire black servants. This may seem odd today, but the African Americans on the White House staff from the previous president worried that the incoming family would not keep them on because of their race. The first lady quickly became visible around Washington, D.C. and the rest of the country meeting with African Americans and talking about their problems. Her husband, President Franklin Roosevelt, was worried that Eleanor was making some white citizens angry by pointing out the injustice of racism. Because of this, Eleanor usually had to travel around the country to work with African-American leaders, rather than have them come to the White House. Mrs. Roosevelt's most famous act to help an individual who was a victim of racism happened in 1939. She heard that Constitution Hall, a popular concert hall in Washington, refused to let the singer Marian Anderson perform there because she was black. The first lady arranged for Anderson to sing at the Lincoln Memorial, and later invited her to the White House so that she could sing before Britain's king and queen.



Eleanor Roosevelt on a school trip.



Integrated military unit, 1945

TRUMAN AND DESEGREGATION

Harry S. Truman (1945-1953) did not seem to be a likely man to fight for the civil rights of African Americans. He grew up in a place and time when discrimination was common, he had relatives who fought for the Confederacy, and his own mother became angry at the mention of Abraham Lincoln's name. But in September 1946, a group of African Americans met with Truman in the White House and told him about the violence that many black families experienced in the South. Truman liked to say that he was president "of all of the people" and he decided that it was time to act. He ordered government lawyers to help civil rights lawyers who were fighting court cases to try to gain more rights for African Americans.

SELECTIONS FROM "AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE WHITE HOUSE"

On July 26, 1948 Truman signed executive orders in the White House that called for desegregation of the federal government and the U. S. military. This meant that blacks could no longer be grouped together and separated from whites. Whites and blacks would work and live with one another in the same place. This executive order outraged the Americans who wanted to continue segregation. Truman knew that he risked losing the support of southerners in the presidential election that year because of the positions he had taken. But he surprised both the American public and all of the experts. Truman won the election and continued to support civil rights for four more years. Truman's actions were only a beginning, but he became the first president since Lincoln to take such serious political risks to help improve the lives of African Americans.

THE LITTLE ROCK NINE

"I can't imagine any set of circumstances that would induce me to send federal troops into any area to enforce the orders of a federal court" explained President Dwight D. Eisenhower (1953-1961) at a White House press conference in July 1957. Two months later, the governor of Arkansas would cause Eisenhower to change his mind. The Supreme Court had ordered the states to desegregate public schools. Local officials in Little Rock, Arkansas had decided to allow African American students to attend Central High School.

In September 1957, Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus called in the Arkansas National Guard to stop this from happening. President Eisenhower was on vacation in Rhode Island at the time. Eisenhower decided the only way to make sure that the children could go to school safely, was to send United States Army troops to Little Rock to protect them from angry



The U.S. Army protected African Americans attending Central High in Little Rock, 1957.

crowds. It was time to tell the American people what the president was doing and why he was doing it. Eisenhower planned a television speech, and he decided that he should leave Rhode Island and broadcast his message from the White House. "Speaking from the house of Lincoln, of Jackson and of Wilson, my words better convey both the sadness I feel in the action I was compelled today to take and the firmness with which I intend to pursue this course until the orders of the federal court at Little Rock can be executed without unlawful interference." The next morning, nine African American students attended classes at Central High. ●

(from whitehousehistory.org)

TIMELINE OF ALONZO FIELDS' YEARS IN THE WHITE HOUSE

- 1931 - Empire State Building opens in New York City.
- 1931 - The Whitney Museum of American Art opens to the public in New York City.
- 1932 - Ford introduces the Model B, the first low-priced car to have a V-8 engine.
- 1933 - Franklin Delano Roosevelt is sworn in as President; he is the last president to be inaugurated on March 4.
- 1933 - President Roosevelt establishes the New Deal, a response to the Great Depression, and focusing on what historians call the "3 Rs": relief, recovery and reform.
- 1933 - Sweeping new programs proposed under President Roosevelt take effect: the Agricultural Adjustment Act, Civil Works Administration, Civilian Conservation Corps, Farm Credit Administration the Home Owners Loan Corporation, the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Public Works Administration, and the National Industrial Recovery Act.
- 1933 - Giuseppe Zangara assassinates Chicago mayor Anton Cermak; the intended target was President-elect Roosevelt, who was not wounded.
- 1933 - 21st Amendment ends Prohibition.
- 1934 - U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission are established.
- 1934 - Dust Bowl begins, causing major ecological and agricultural damage to the Great Plains states; severe drought, heat waves and other factors were contributors.
- 1935 - The F.B.I. is established with J. Edgar Hoover as its first director.
- 1935 - Social Security Act enacted.
- 1936 - Life magazine publishes first issue.
- 1937 - Hindenburg disaster kills 35 people and marking an end to airship travel.
- 1937 - Golden Gate Bridge completed in San Francisco.
- 1938 - Orson Welles' *The War of the Worlds* is broadcast.
- 1939 - Nazi Germany invades Poland; World War II begins.
- 1939 - President Roosevelt, appearing at the opening of the 1939 New York World's Fair, becomes the first President to give a speech that is broadcast on television. Semi-regular broadcasts air during the next two years.
- 1940 - Selective Service Act established the first peacetime draft in U.S. history.
- 1940 - Oldsmobile becomes the first car maker to offer a fully automatic transmission.
- 1940 - Bugs Bunny, Tom and Jerry make their cartoon debuts.
- 1940 - Billboard magazine publishes its first music popularity chart, the predecessor to today's Hot 100.
- 1940 - U.S. presidential election, 1940: Franklin D. Roosevelt wins reelection to a record third term.
- 1941 - Regular commercial television broadcasting begins; NBC television launched.
- 1941 - Attack on Pearl Harbor; U.S. enters World War II by declaring war on Japan the next day on December 8; and three days later against Germany and Italy.
- 1942 - Japanese American internment begins, per executive order by President Roosevelt; the order also authorizes the seizure of their property.
- 1942–1945 - Automobile production in the United States for private consumers halted.
- 1942 - *Casablanca* released.
- 1942 - U.S.-controlled Commonwealth of the Philippines conquered by Japanese forces.

TIMELINE OF ALONZO FIELDS' YEARS IN THE WHITE HOUSE

- 1943 - *Oklahoma!* the first musical written by the team of composer Richard Rodgers and librettist Oscar Hammerstein II opens on Broadway.
- 1943 - Detroit, Michigan race riots.
- 1944 - D-Day
- 1944 - U.S. presidential election, 1944: Franklin D. Roosevelt wins reelection, becomes the only U.S. president elected to a fourth term.
- 1945 - Franklin D. Roosevelt dies; Harry S. Truman becomes President.
- 1945 - Germany surrenders, end of World War II in Europe.
- 1945 - *Carousel* opens on Broadway.
- 1945 - Atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Days later, Japan surrenders, ending World War II.
- 1945 - United Nations Charter signed in San Francisco, establishing the United Nations; it replaces the League of Nations.
- 1946 - Winston Churchill's Iron Curtain speech
- 1947 - U.F.O. crash at Roswell, New Mexico
- 1947 - Polaroid camera invented.
- 1947 - Jackie Robinson breaks color barrier in baseball.
- 1947 - Jackson Pollock begins painting his most famous series of paintings called the drip paintings in Easthampton, New York.
- 1947 - The World Series is broadcast live for the first time.
- 1948 - U.S. presidential election, 1948: President Truman is re-elected.
- 1949 - Soviet Union tests its first atomic bomb.
- 1949 - Department of War becomes Department of Defense.
- 1949 - Germany divided into East and West.
- 1949 - Truman attempts to continue FDR's legacy with his Fair Deal, but most acts don't pass.
- 1950 - Senator Joseph McCarthy gains power, and the era of McCarthyism begins.
- 1950 - Korean War begins.
- 1950 - The comic strip *Peanuts*, by Charles M. Schulz, is first published.
- 1950 - Failed assassination attempt by two Puerto Rican nationals on President Harry S. Truman while the President was living at Blair House.
- 1951 - 22nd Amendment established term limits for President.
- 1951 - The situation comedy *I Love Lucy* premieres on CBS, sparking the rise of television in the American home and the Golden Age of Television.
- 1952 - The debut of the *Today* show on NBC, originally hosted by Dave Garroway.
- 1951 - *Catcher in the Rye* is published by J.D. Salinger.
- 1953 - Dwight D. Eisenhower inaugurated as President.

(from Wikipedia.org)

SELECTION FROM "TO THINE OWN SELF BE TRUE: WHAT TELL-ALL MEMOIRS TELL US ABOUT OURSELVES"

by Christine Rosen

The demand for loyalty between boss and employee is perhaps most potent – and most fraught – when one’s boss is the president of the United States. The White House is both a hothouse and a graveyard for professional loyalty. Here, power is tantalizingly close but access to it is often fleeting; the White House has a high turnover rate for staff. Over time, and most dramatically in the last thirty years, the unspoken rules of loyalty and the virtual ban on revelation that used to define White House employment have eroded.

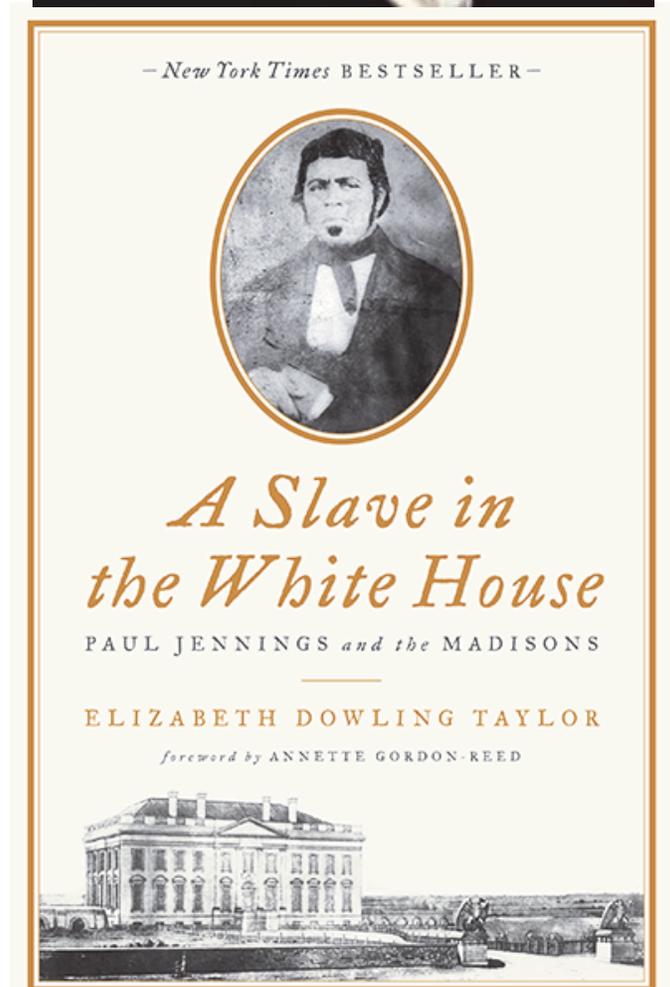
One of the first insider portraits of a president and his White House came from the pen of a slave. In 1865, Paul Jennings, a slave of James Madison who acted as his “body servant,” published a book, *A Colored Man’s Reminiscences of James Madison*. Jennings knew Madison well; he “shaved him every other day for sixteen years,” and was present at Madison’s death, after which Mrs. Madison sold him to another slaveholder (Daniel Webster later bought Jennings and manumitted him).

Jennings was one of the first White House memoirists to employ a device now ubiquitous in the genre: the insider’s challenge to official wisdom. Mr. Jennings offered an alternative narrative of the rescue of a Gilbert Stuart portrait of George Washington during the British invasion of the Capitol and White House in 1814. “It has often been stated in print,” Jennings wrote, “that when Mrs. Madison escaped from the White House, she cut out from the frame the large portrait of Washington (now in one of the parlors there), and carried it off. This is totally false. She had no time for doing it. It would have required a ladder to get it down. All she carried off was the silver in her reticule, as the British were thought to be but a few squares off, and were expected every moment.” In fact, Jennings said, it was a Frenchman named John Susé, with the help of the president’s gardener, who salvaged the portrait.

Despite his taking issue with the conventional wisdom about Dolley Madison, Jennings remained fiercely loyal to the Madisons. When the widow Mrs. Madison was left destitute toward the end of her life, Jennings said he “occasionally gave her small sums from my own pocket” to help her with the “necessaries of life.” He described her as a “remarkably fine woman” and James Madison as “one of the best men that ever lived.”



President James Madison



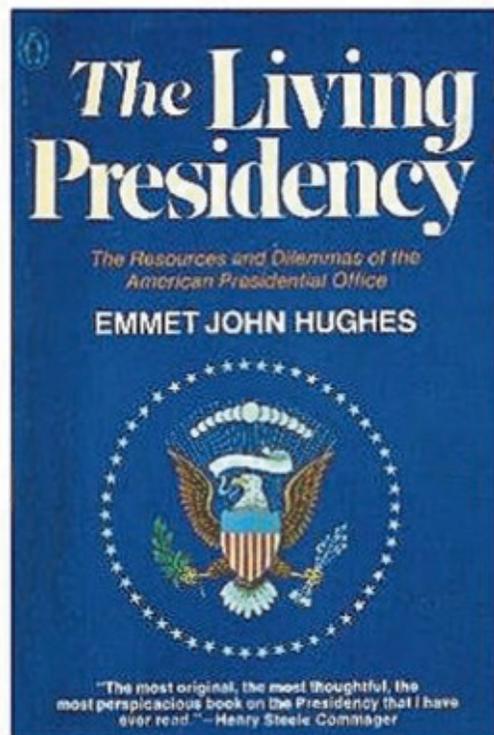
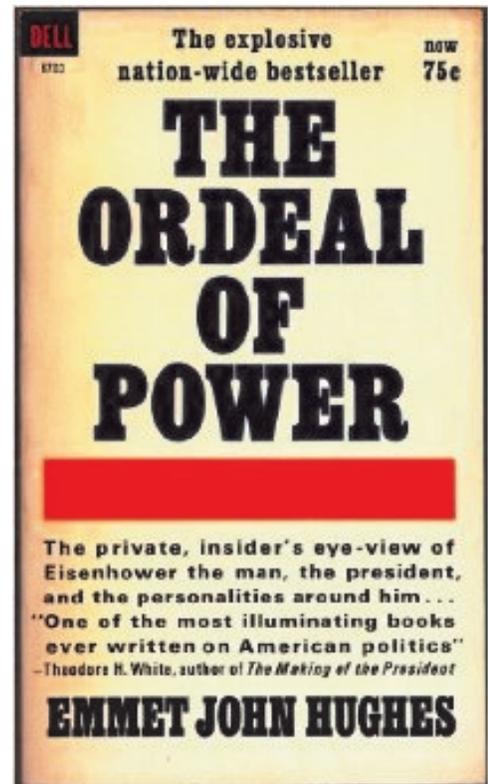
SELECTION FROM “TO THINE OWN SELF BE TRUE: WHAT TELL-ALL MEMOIRS TELL US ABOUT OURSELVES”

Between Madison and Franklin Delano Roosevelt there were few insider memoirs of significance, with the exception of the spiteful analysis written by Andrew Jackson’s treasury secretary. It seems hard to believe now, but FDR was one of the first victims of a disloyal aide – betrayed by a member of his own “brain trust,” an adviser named Raymond Moley who published *After Seven Years* in 1939. The memoir painted a portrait of FDR as hopelessly in thrall to dangerously leftist ideas and urged voters not to reelect him in 1940. Roosevelt, not surprisingly, was unhappy; according to presidential historian Michael Beschloss, he said Moley had “kissed a** – and told.”

But FDR also enjoyed more traditional loyalty from his aides. William D. Hassett, who kept a private diary detailing FDR’s activities during periods of “press blackout” beginning in January 1942, took care to note that his was “a private record with no thought that it should be seen by other eyes than those of the writer.” Hassett, called “the soul of discretion” by one historian, left explicit instructions that if there ever was interest in publishing the diary, this should happen only after Roosevelt’s death. Hassett’s is an affectionate portrait of the last few years of Roosevelt’s life, and from the diary one catches frequent glimpses of FDR’s excellent sense of humor and love of nonsense verse. Hassett also included wonderful descriptions of the eminences who passed through the parlor in Hyde Park, from Winston Churchill to Crown Princess Juliana of the Netherlands, all of whom FDR called by their first names.

Yet given the still widely held notion that White House aides should never reveal private administration business to the public, even mild public criticism of a president elicited strong social disapproval in the 1940s and 50s. Former Eisenhower speechwriter Emmet John Hughes began criticizing Eisenhower in the late 1950s, offering his opinion that “as an intellectual [Eisenhower] bestowed upon the games of golf and bridge all the enthusiasm and perseverance that he withheld from his books and ideas.” In 1963 Hughes published *The Ordeal of Power: A Political Memoir of the Eisenhower Years*, which faulted Eisenhower for not using his popularity to achieve more for the country. (According to Beschloss, Eisenhower was so incensed when he found out about the book that he went to Hughes’s publisher, Doubleday, and asked them to cancel the contract. They did and Hughes had to find another publisher.) Publicly, Hughes’s book was, as the *Washington Post* noted several decades later, “widely attacked for its then-controversial disclosure of private conversations.” ●

(from *incharacter.org*)



2013 ARTICLE ABOUT ALONZO FIELDS' NIECE & NEPHEW " 'THE BUTLER' HITS HOME FOR CHICAGO SIBLINGS"

September 2, 2013
Dawn Turner Trice

In the hit movie *Lee Daniels' The Butler* there's a scene in which lead character Cecil Gaines is trying to get a job on the White House service staff and he's interviewed by the head butler, an African-American man.

Chicago siblings Loretta Fields and Clinton Fields believe that the head butler character is based on their uncle, Alonzo Fields, the first African American to have that job in the White House. Fields worked there for 21 years, from the Hoover to Eisenhower administrations, and hired Eugene Allen, on whom the Gaines character is based.



Clinton and Loretta Fields show the hat that was a parting gift from President Franklin Roosevelt to their father, George. "Dad was very loyal to Roosevelt," Loretta said. Their father and uncle worked as servants at the White House. Alonzo Fields, their uncle, worked in the White House for 21 years. (Alex Garcia, Chicago Tribune)

The movie, despite fairly average reviews, has done well at the box office and resonated with a crossover audience. One reason is the all-star cast, including Forest Whitaker as Gaines and Oprah Winfrey as his wife, Gloria. But another is that the story, even with the Hollywood excesses, is simply compelling.

Think about it: at a time when the job prospects for African Americans were not only severely limited but didn't offer much advancement, here was a gig that afforded an ordinary man a bird's eye view of moments in U.S. history that ranged from mundane to extraordinary.

It's as though the silver tray he held in his white-gloved hands simultaneously rendered him invisible and super-powerful. There was always dignity in the hard work of being a maid or butler — the problem was that many blacks were often diminished and still treated like slaves.

"I read somewhere that Uncle Lonnie said he worked in a fabulous prison and the president was his warden," said Clinton Fields, 58, a Beverly resident and retired Chicago firefighter. "It was the best house in the country to work in and yet he had to deal with all the racism."

"Back then, if you were black, you were a Pullman Porter, if you were lucky, or a domestic," said Loretta Fields, who lives in South Shore and sells real estate. "You didn't have many choices."

In his 1961 memoir *My 21 Years in the White House*, Alonzo Fields said he was frustrated by black and white servants having to eat in separate quarters. But he delighted in meeting the dignitaries of the day.

He also wrote about President Herbert Hoover exercising with a medicine ball, and the president following the news regarding the 1932 kidnapping of aviator Charles Lindbergh's baby. Fields, who was born in 1900, said that he served as Winston Churchill's valet whenever President Franklin Roosevelt invited Churchill to stay at the White House.

And he once surprised first lady Bess Truman with homemade rolls on a night when she was feeling homesick for Missouri and its fresh bread.

2013 ARTICLE ABOUT ALONZO FIELDS' NIECE & NEPHEW " 'THE BUTLER' HITS HOME FOR CHICAGO SIBLINGS"

The stories about Alonzo Fields are enough to hold your attention, but, as it turns out, Loretta's and Clinton's father, George Fields, also worked in the White House.

According to the family, he was Roosevelt's valet from about 1937 until 1941 when he left to join the Navy. George Fields, born in 1911, shows up in the 1940 U.S. Census as one of the White House's four "Negro servants." Alonzo Fields got his younger brother the job.

Clinton said that although his uncle and father had to agree not to divulge what went on in the White House, his father was far more tight-lipped.

"I remember my father talking about having trained Roosevelt's (Scottish terrier), Fala," said Clinton. "When he left, Roosevelt asked him if there was anything that he wanted as a memento. He gave him a hat and several dining table place cards."

"Dad was very loyal to Roosevelt," Loretta said. "With (the president) having polio, my father felt that as his valet, what went on behind closed doors was going to stay there."

(In the 2001 movie *Pearl Harbor* there's a scene in which an angry Roosevelt tries to lift himself from his wheelchair to stand and a black valet rushes to his aid. "Get back, George," Roosevelt says. Clinton believes that character is based on his father.)

Alonzo and George Fields grew up in Indianapolis after their parents moved the family there from what was then Lyles Station, IN. It began in the early 1840s as a settlement for free blacks and runaway slaves.

Clinton said his uncle had a lovely baritone voice and initially wanted to be a classical singer. In his 20s, Alonzo Fields moved to Boston to attend the New England Conservatory. Unable to pay for it, he took a job as a butler for Samuel Stratton, the president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who agreed to pay Fields' tuition.

While working for Stratton, Fields got to meet Thomas Edison and John D. Rockefeller and believed the job would

make him more polished and cultured.

"But Stratton passed away in 1931 and my uncle was out of a job," Clinton said. "(First Lady Lou Henry Hoover) had heard him sing during a visit to Stratton's home and remembered him and invited him to work at the White House."

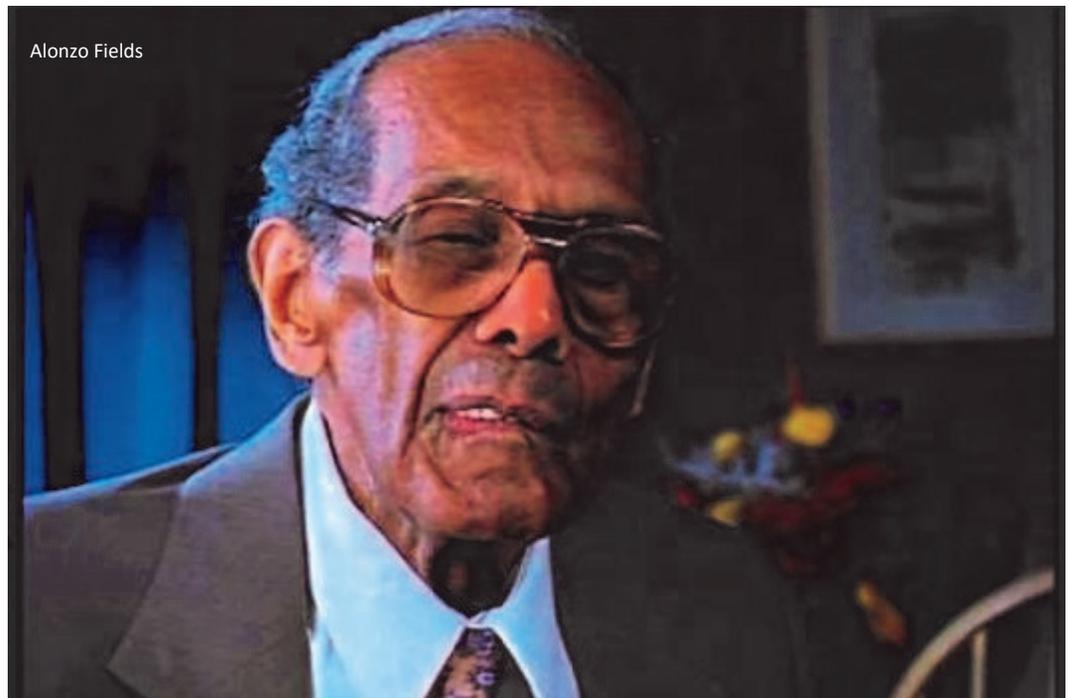
Loretta said that her father and uncle viewed their jobs at the White House as springboards to something more.

"Uncle Lonnie never became a concert performer, but he was able to parlay his experiences working for presidents and became a public speaker," said Loretta, adding that he was featured in *Life* magazine. "He lived off the money he made from speaking engagements until he died" in 1994.

"My father left the Navy and became an accountant for the (Internal Revenue Service). They moved him to Chicago and he met my mother." He died in 1991.

Loretta has three children and so does her brother. One of the six has a doctorate; four either have postgraduate degrees or are working on them. The youngest is an undergraduate in college.

"Our kids have professional careers and they can do the work they do because of the people who came before them," Loretta said. "My father and uncle are part of a large group whose labor laid the groundwork for us to move forward." ●



Alonzo Fields

(from *ChicagoTribune.com*)

PERSONAL ARTIFACTS FROM ALONZO FIELDS



On March 27, 1952, President and Mrs. Truman prepare to reoccupy the White House following its renovation.

From left to right, Charles K. Clauch, Usher; President Truman; Howell G. Crim, Chief Usher; Mrs. Truman; **Alonzo Fields, Maitre d'hotel**; and J.B. West, Usher.

At far right, William Kelly, Project Manager, Public Buildings, and Jess Larson, General Services Administration, admire the ceremonial White House key they are about to present to the president.

White House staff, c. 1950.

White House employees and members of their families often socialized together.

In 1992, former chief butler and maître d' Alonzo Fields (seated, center) observed, "I see the White House as belonging to the people, not only as a home for a president every four years, but as a monument to the hopes of the people."



PERSONAL ARTIFACTS FROM ALONZO FIELDS



Tip envelope, c. 1948.

It was a longstanding White House tradition for workers to receive a gratuity from the first family at Christmas. Alonzo Fields recalled that President and Mrs. Hoover would give each employee “an autographed picture and an envelope with a crisp new \$5 bill for servants of the lower bracket, and larger amounts for those of the higher brackets.”

The size of the tip President Truman presented to Fields in this envelope is not known.

Notification of Personnel Action, 1948.

Longtime chief butler and maître d’ Alonzo Fields received a raise of \$330 (or 12.6 percent) in his annual salary.

Fields helped ensure that White House employees received compensatory time off when they worked more than eight hours a day.

NOTIFICATION OF PERSONNEL ACTION			
Name	DATE OF BIRTH	DATE OF SERVICE	POSITION
Mr. Alonzo Fields	4/20/90	10/10/48	
This is to notify you of the following action affecting your employment:			
1. KIND OF ACTION OR OTHER INFORMATION		2. EFFECTIVE DATE & RATE, SALARY OR OTHER APPLICABLE INFORMATION	
Administrative Pay Increase		10/17/48	
NOTE			
Salary	1. POSITION TITLE	Date	
Sal., \$2617.72 per annum	2. SERVICE GRADE SYMBOL	Sal., \$2617.72 per annum	
Executive Messes and Granda	3. ORGANIZATIONAL ASSIGNMENT	Date	
Washington, D. C.	4. ORGANIZATIONAL ASSIGNMENT	Date	
<input type="checkbox"/> FULLY <input type="checkbox"/> PARTIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TEMPORARY <input type="checkbox"/> FIELD <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITARIAN			
By Signature of the President <i>[Signature]</i> Associate Director National Park Service Department of the Interior IN EXECUTION OF STATUTE AUTHORITY			
5. EMPLOYEE'S ORGANIZATION 6. EMPLOYEE'S CLASSIFICATION SYMBOL 7. DATE OF BIRTH 8. GRADE SYMBOL 9. DATE OF SERVICE 10. ORGANIZATION			
1. EMPLOYEE COPY			

(from whitehousehistory.org)

ABOUT AMERICAN BLUES THEATER

AMERICAN BLUES THEATER—30TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON

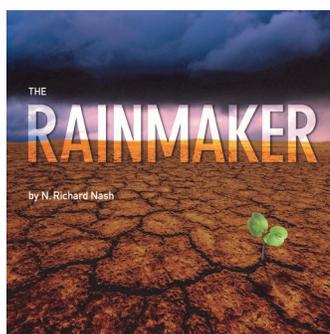
American Blues Theater is the premier American theater producing visceral theatrical works while engaging its audience in missions of local service agencies. American Blues Theater illuminates the American ideas of freedom, equality, and opportunity in the plays produced and communities served.

The multi-generational and interdisciplinary artists have established the second-oldest professional Equity Ensemble theater in Chicago. The 38-member Ensemble has 530 combined years of collaboration on stage. As of 2016, the theater and artists received 172 Joseph Jefferson Awards and nominations that celebrate excellence in Chicago theater and over 28 Black Theatre Alliance Awards. The artists are honored with Pulitzer Prize nominations, Academy Awards, Golden Globe Awards, Emmy Awards and numerous other accolades.

For over thirty years, American Blues has created essential productions and live theatrical experiences for Chicagoland. Their best known production is Chicago's holiday tradition *It's a Wonderful Life: Live in Chicago!* that has entertained over 50,000 patrons since 2002! Terry Teachout of *The Wall Street Journal* wrote American Blues is "exceptional" and the company "feels like home". Chris Jones of *Chicago Tribune* claimed Blues is "strikingly honest [with] deep emotional souls".

In addition to first-class theater, American Blues Theater believes it is an honor and duty to serve the community. They provide an integrated arts education program to Chicago Public Schools that serves over 1,000 students annually. They hold "Pink Previews" which donates a portion of box office sales to breast cancer research. They donate thousands of complimentary tickets to underserved communities. They provide community engagement events called "Town Halls" for patrons following Sunday matinee performance, including curated discussions with Northwestern University psychologists. As a Blue Star Theater, they honor military service and first-responders through various initiatives. Former President of Illinois Labor History Society, Larry Spivak wrote, "American Blues is a dynamic force in Chicago – connecting culture, art, history, and politics into a holistic, aesthetic experience."

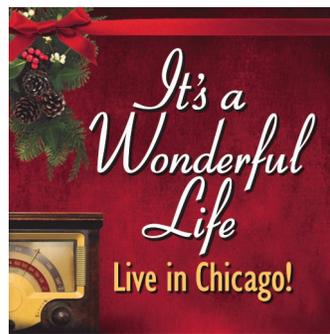
SEASON 30 "Seeing is Believing"



by N. Richard Nash

Directed by
Edward Blatchford*

Aug 28—Sept 27, 2015

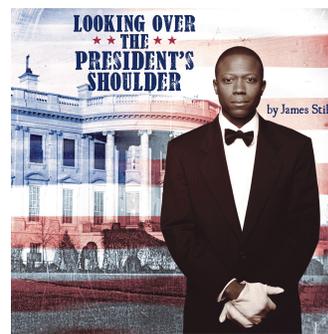


from Frank Capra's film

Directed by
Gwendolyn Whiteside*

Music direction by
Michael Mahler*

Nov 20—Dec 27, 2015



by James Still*

Directed by
Timothy Douglas

Featuring Manny Buckley*

Feb 5—Mar 6, 2016



Book & lyrics by Howard Ashman
Music by Alan Menken

Directed by
Jonathan Berry

Music direction by
Austin Cook*

Apr 29—May 29, 2016

*Ensemble member or Artistic Affiliate of American Blues Theater

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT THE THEATER

PERFORMANCE VENUE

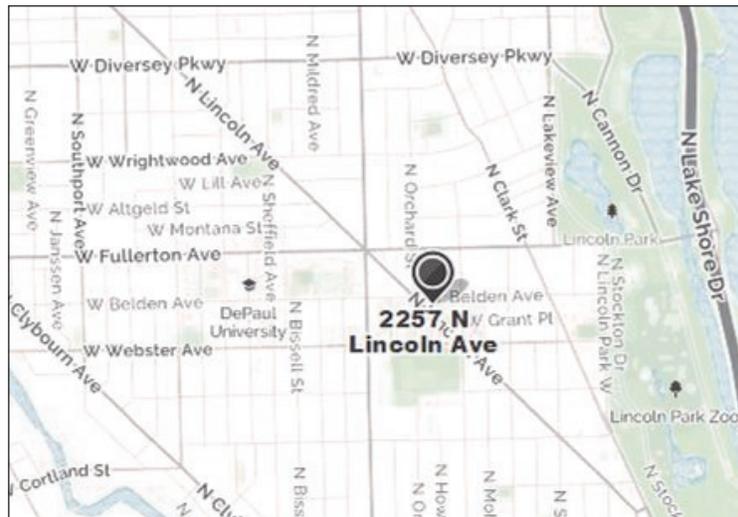
Greenhouse Theater Center
2257 N. Lincoln Avenue
Chicago, IL 60614

BOX OFFICE

(773) 404-7336

FOR MORE INFORMATION

AmericanBluesTheater.com



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