

SPECIAL ISSUE

The Presidency

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'For the historian,
500 years from now'

The awesome job of President of the United States of America is the subject of this special issue; in it the tapestry of this extraordinary office takes shape in stories which look back to its past and speculate upon its future. Some show, for instance, the images of earlier Presidents and their families, made when photography was young. But now the camera has turned full-time historian and the picture essay in this issue gives an unprecedented look at life in the White House—from the inside out. The story is the work of President Lyndon Johnson's personal photographer, Yoichi Okamoto, who has spent the last four and a half years carefully chronicling the President's day-to-day activities.

LIFE's Art Director Bernard Quint met Okamoto at a photographic seminar 10 years ago. The two became friends and since then have often met to discuss photography and Okamoto's unique assignment. When we decided to do this issue, Bernie naturally turned to Oke as a priceless source of photographs. With permission from the White House, he assembled the story on pages 32-49.

Okamoto was born in Yonkers, N.Y. 53 years ago. He joined the Army as photographer in World War II and stayed overseas until 1954, when he returned to be chief of the USIA still-photography department. One morning Ed Murrow, the USIA director, asked Oke to go with Vice President Johnson to Berlin. "He liked my pictures," Oke says, "and from then on I went on every foreign trip with him. A week after the assassination of President John Kennedy, the new President called me in and asked me to take some good portraits of him. I said, 'Rather than just take portraits, I'd like to hang around and photograph history being made.' He asked me when I wanted to start work. I said, 'My cameras are outside.'"

Oke has the ability to make his pictures without interfering with what's happening. Using natural light, avoiding flash whenever possible, he attends Security Council and Cabinet meetings as well as personal appointments of the President. "I listen just enough to see how everyone is reacting," he says.

"Then I get involved with my photography. My job is to interpret what is going on the way I see it. I'm not trying to take pictures for public relations, or even for news. I want to tell what's happened for the historian 500 years from now."



OKAMOTO



QUINT

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George P. Hunt
GEORGE P. HUNT, Managing Editor

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Presidency



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