



Five Presidents, by Clint Hill
Reviewed by Cindy Kennedy, November 2016

For those of us of a certain age, November 22, 1963 is seared permanently in our memories. Amid the tragic events of that day in Dallas, one act of courage stands out. After the shots were fired, Secret Service Agent Clint Hill climbed onto the rear seat of the presidential car as it sped to the hospital, in a brave attempt to protect the mortally wounded President and distraught First Lady.

Clint Hill's service, however, was not limited to protecting President Kennedy's family. In his aptly titled new book *Five Presidents*, Clint Hill writes about his 17-year-career in the Secret Service, working for five administrations. As a newly minted agent, Hill joined Dwight Eisenhower's detail in 1958, during that president's second term. Hill continued on through the Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, and Ford administrations, leaving the agency in 1975. His unique perspective is a travelogue through mid-20th century America.

One of America's oldest US law-enforcement agencies, the U.S. Secret Service was created in 1865. But it wasn't until after the assassination of President William McKinley in 1901 that the duty to protect the president was assigned to the Secret Service. Currently, the agency has two different responsibilities: to investigate and prevent financial crimes and to protect our nation's leaders.

Five Presidents is chocked with fascinating vignettes of little-known events, including Hill's decision to place White House files under protection after a midnight call about the Watergate break-in. He describes Eisenhower's reaction to Khrushchev's refusal to talk following the U-2 incident. Among the challenges Hill faced was protecting Ford after the Nixon pardon. Throughout his career, Hill has expressed only one regret: that he was unable to save President Kennedy, which has haunted him to this day.

Clearly, Clint Hill, a witness to history, has had a remarkable public-service career. How fortunate we readers are that he's still around to share his stories with us.