Discussion Questions The Residence

1. Was there anything that surprised you in this book – staff, first families, etc? If so, what and why?
2. The author mentioned the love Jackie Kennedy showed for Chef Usher J. B. West at his passing. “She called and asked first lady Nancy Reagan if he could be buried at Arlington Cemetery. Even though it was reserved for career military personnel and their families -- Reagan agreed.” What do you think about someone who is not career military being permitted burial in Arlington Cemetery?
3. If you had been a child growing up in the White House, how do you think you would have felt about the constant Secret Service in your life and activities. Would you try to ditch them? How?
4. “”When Chelsea Clinton moved into the White House in 1993, Steve Ford sent her a letter. His advice – “Make friends with the Secret Service as they might become your only link to the outside world.”” Given events that White House children have had to endure, What are your thoughts on this advice?
5. The author discussed the personalities and quirks of Presidents and First Ladies whom they served. Did anything surprise you?
6. How would you feel about shifting gears every four years as did the White House staff?
7. What are your thoughts on the next first family who will inhabit the White House?
8. Chapter 10, “heartbreak and Hope”, offers insights from the staff’s perspective on tragedies in the White House – from Kennedy’s assassination to 911. When Kennedy was assassinated in 1963, Most of us in this room were pre-teens or teens. Our information concerning this event came from the media and from adults. What are your thoughts as you read about this event from the perspective of the staff who served the Kennedy family?
9. As the events of 911 unfolded, the author states “Even as people were evacuating the White House, Walters knew that he would be staying.” As Walters put it, “As far as I was concerned my responsibility was there at the White House.” How does that statement reflect the work of White House staff over the years?
10. Would you recommend “the Residence” to a friend? Why or why not?