

AirSpace Season 2, Episode 3

Hail To the Chief

Nick:

So, they call the White House "the people's house," and there's an old joke about it being the crown of public housing in the United States. Does that make Air Force One public transportation?

Emily:

Paid for by the public-

Nick:

Fair enough.

Emily:

So, it's public transportation.

Nick:

It's just not public access.

Emily:

Just not public access.

Matt:

Yeah, so publicly subsidized but not publicly enjoyed.

Nick:

Today on AirSpace, we're going to talk about presidential flight, specifically the people who fly and fly with the President of the United States. We assure you no presidents were interviewed in the making of this episode.

Emily:

We'll talk about the luxuries and familiarities of one of the most romanticized aircraft in the world with a member of the White House press corps.

Scott Horsley:

No one ever says, "Oh, have you been in the Oval Office," or "Have you gotten to meet the President?" The first question they always ask me is, "Have you flown on Air Force One?"

Matt:

And we'll talk with a former Marine One pilot about the seriousness of the responsibilities that come along with the job to fly the President of the United States on good days and bad.

Matt Howard:

My most memorable flight was to the Wall Street pad on September 14th, 2001.

Nick:

Presidential flight, from the cockpit in front to the Press Corps in back, and we all know who sits in the middle. That's coming up next on AirSpace from the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum, with help from PRX.

Emily:

So, let's start with what we do know about Air Force One.

Nick:

It's not the name of the airplane in the way that the White House is the name of the building.

Matt:

That's right. It's whatever plane that the President happens to be flying on, which is usually the plane that we recognize as Air Force One, that becomes designated as Air Force One.

Nick:

Right. When the President is on board is when it's Air Force One, but when he's traveling on the aircraft of another armed service, the call sign changes accordingly. So, Marine One is the President's helicopter when the President is on board. Army One is if he's traveling on board an Army aircraft. Navy One has been used exactly one time. It's when President George W. Bush landed on the aircraft carrier in 2003. There's never been a Coast Guard One. There's been a Coast Guard Two though, when the Vice President flies on board.

Matt:

So, Emily and I were talking about this with you present. Sorry, Nick.

Emily:

We were on our way over to the studio.

Matt:

Yeah. We were walking over and we were wondering: Do they ever rename other vessels when the President is on board? If the President is on an aircraft carrier, does the aircraft carrier get a designation?

Nick:

No. Not to the best of my knowledge.

Matt:

So, it's just aircraft? Why are aircraft so special?

Nick:

It possibly has something to do with radio communication and air traffic control. I think the reason that you don't call Air Force One "Air Force One" when the President's not on board is because it doesn't need the same kind of care.

Emily:

What if the President was paragliding?

Matt:

If it is owned by the Air Force, then yes, it will be Air Force One.

Nick:

But a private or commercial aircraft carrying the President would be Executive One.

Emily:

Does that happen any more?

Nick:

It happened once that I know of when President Nixon flew back from California to Washington DC, and to make a point about energy conservation, he flew commercial on the way back, which actually didn't make a great point about energy conservation because that meant that Air Force One had to fly back empty.

Matt:

So, the idea of having a plane that is special and just for the President, that started way before President Nixon.

Brian Laslie:

Yes, my name is Brian Laslie. I am an Air Force historian, and I am also an adjunct professor of history at the United States Air Force Academy.

Matt:

Dr. Brian Laslie explained to me that the creation of presidential flight was like a natural progression that came out of the nation's feelings toward flight in general.

Brian Laslie:

For much of the 20th century, there was such a love affair with flight to begin with. So, when you go back to World War I, who are the heroes of the time? The knights of the sky. It's this one-on-one aerial combat, and then into the '20s you've got the early airshows. So, America is just really in love with the concept of the airplane and the idea of flight and everything that's wrapped up in that. So, when you take that and move that forward to the late '30s, now you can wrap the office of the President in with that.

Emily:

So, actually the first President to fly did not fly as the President.

Nick:

Say what?

Emily:

Theodore Roosevelt flew in a plane in 1910 after he had finished his term in office.

Matt:

Well, it would make sense that it was Theodore Roosevelt. Here's this rambunctious, risk-taking, bull... I don't know. Was he a bull rider?

Nick:

Take the bull moose by the horns.

Matt:

Yeah, the bull moose party.

Nick:

We'll call that Biplane One, even though he wasn't president at the time.

Emily:

Well, we need to set the scene a little bit because when I think early airplanes, I'm still thinking like 1930s, Amelia Earhart's plane.

Nick:

Yeah, this was-

Emily:

1910, this is a whole different story.

Matt:

Yeah. This is sort of the open cockpit biplane type of plane where you're just sitting in a hole with your head sticking out of the plane.

Nick:

And it could be really, really dangerous. The Wright brothers actually had a policy to not fly at the same time in case something happened, which is just like the President and the Vice President.

Emily:

So, this is my being a space person asking a silly question. By biplane do we mean two people or do we mean-?

Matt:

No, we mean two wings.

Emily:

But all airplanes have two wings.

Matt:

Two sets of wings.

Nick:

Two horizontal sets of wings.

Emily:

Oh, like stacked.

Nick:

Yeah, like a stack of wings.

Emily:

Okay, okay.

Nick:

Like a wing sandwich.

Matt:

Like graham crackers put together with toothpicks.

Nick:

And sometimes just as stable.

Emily:

But there were just two people on the flight?

Matt:

In that plane that he flew in, yes. It was a two-seater.

Emily:

Okay. So, if Teddy Roosevelt was the first president to fly, even though he wasn't president at the time, he was no longer president, who was the first president to fly as president?

Nick:

His cousin, Franklin Roosevelt.

Emily:

Tell me more.

Nick:

This would have been during World War II. It was 30 or so years after Teddy Roosevelt's adventure flight, and it was on a much more important occasion. This was when he was meeting Churchill in Casa Blanca to plan strategy through the US involvement in the war.

Emily:

But it was a secret, right? It's not like they put it in the papers and said, "He's going to get on an airplane."

Nick:

Super secret, really grueling journey. It was four days each way. Roosevelt was in poor health. This was a really big deal. This was high national security.

Matt:

So, there are these triumphant moments in presidential flight like FDR's World War II trip across the Atlantic, and then there are ones that probably stick in our memories not because they were triumphs but because they were low points in American history. So, one of the most memorable scenes I think that people know in the history of American presidencies was also one of the saddest days in presidential flight. We'll let our flight historian, Brian, set the scene.

Brian Laslie:

November 22nd, 1963, President Kennedy has traveled with Vice President Lyndon Johnson and Jackie Kennedy to Dallas, Texas. It's a beautifully clear day, and as President Kennedy lands and disembarks Air Force One, he is met by a screaming crowd. So, Air Force One that morning is really the backdrop for what is arguably the darkest day in presidential air travel history.

Matt:

Brian explained to me that this was of course the day that JFK was shot and killed. His body was actually flown back in the presidential plane, and Lyndon Johnson was sworn in to take his place. The image of Air Force One was all over the news coverage that day.

Nick:

So, you guys are all picturing the photo of Johnson being sworn in aboard Air Force One with Jackie Kennedy beside him, right?

Matt:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nick:

So, if you're actually looking at the photo, look closely and you can see that everyone is absolutely sweating bullets. And the reason, apart from the tumultuous, chaotic day was that the Secret Service was not a hundred percent confident in the situation on the ground. So, the airplane was sitting there ready to take off, which means it had unplugged from the airport power-

Matt:

No air conditioning.

Nick:

And the air conditioning was off, yeah. They were sitting in Dallas sunshine for a couple of hours but ready to take off at any moment, and it got very hot on that plane-

Emily:

Oh boy.

Nick:

If you're particularly wearing wool suits, as everyone was.

Emily:

And Air Force One was pretty special to the Kennedy's specifically, right?

Nick:

Kennedy famously had his own aircraft, Caroline, that he campaigned in. And as a private aircraft, that would have had a level of style and comfort that you wouldn't have found on a military transport, which until that era would have been what the President flew on. But this is Camelot. You need something a little bit punchier, right?

Matt:

Right. So, just like they did with the White House, they came in as the young, hip presidential First Lady and President, and they also transformed Air Force One for a new generation.

Nick:

That's when you start to get the blue and white livery on Air Force One, the blue and white paint scheme, and the lettering from the typeface from the Declaration of Independence?

Matt:

Yeah, essentially what we think of today as what Air Force One should look like.

Emily:

Have either of you been on Air Force One?

Nick:

No, I have never been on Air Force One.

Emily:

I haven't even been on a replica.

Matt:

No, I haven't either, although I've seen a retired Air Force One. So, President Kennedy's Air Force One is on display in Dayton, Ohio at the Air Force Museum there.

Nick:

Where none of us have ever been.

Matt:

Brian has actually been on board, so I asked him to tell us a little bit more about it.

Brian Laslie:

I have been on that aircraft, and I have been on the current incarnation. The aircraft itself is built kind of like a flying White House, so the President has his own sleeping quarters on the aircraft. He has his own office on the aircraft. And as you go further back, there is almost a mini Cabinet room for him to hold meetings at. It's a very hierarchical aircraft. I would say the general rule of thumb is you can go backwards but you cannot come forward to a higher level of compartment.

If I remember correctly, I think we took our shoes off and then put on some slipover booties over our socks. The first thing that struck me was how soft the carpet was. They weren't going to let my soiled shoes touch the presidential carpet.

Matt:

Yeah. So, he said it was pretty soft on his little tootsies.

Emily:

I'm really excited about plush carpets and booties.

Matt:

If you were actually riding on the plane-

Emily:

You're allowed to wear your shoes?

Matt:

You probably get to wear your shoes, yeah. But if you're just a lowly historian-

Emily:

I was really excited that if I ever got to be on Air Force One, I was going to get some slippers.

Matt:

Well, maybe you get that too, but-

Nick:

Actually, President H. W. Bush was known to occasionally walk around in white slippers with the presidential seal on them.

Emily:

Yeah, I heard about that. H. W. was known for showering on board and then walking around in his presidential slippers. Most of us just really want to fly on an airplane in something comfortable. Reagan used to change into a velour jumpsuit. Sweatsuit? Tracksuit?

Matt:

Leisure suit, maybe?

Emily:

Leisure suit.

Matt:

So, Brian told me that when he was on Air Force One he saw a half-eaten pack of peanut M&Ms on the President's desk, which if it was my Air Force One, it would be a bag of gummy bears probably. But I bet all the Presidents have had their favorite snacks, just like the rest of us.

Nick:

Reagan would have had jelly beans.

Matt:

Yeah, of course.

Emily:

Uh-uh. Birthday cake.

Matt:

With jelly beans?

Nick:

Birthday cake?

Emily:

He had birthday cake on board at all times.

Matt:

Just in case there was a birthday or because he really liked birthday cake?

Nick:

I don't think we can ignore the possibility that he just really wanted cake.

Emily:

This is a very boy scout kind of thing to do, always be prepared.

Matt:

But aside from junk food, George H. W. Bush actually banned broccoli from the plane. He famously did not like broccoli.

Nick:

I'd heard that, that the smell was really, really upsetting to him. And I think he's used the like, "That may appear childish, but I'm the President of the United States. I feel like I've earned the right not to smell broccoli everywhere I go."

Emily:

Seems fair.

Air Force One is such an exclusive travel experience in that not a lot of people get to do it. There's a perception that it's a real luxury travel experience. I had a chance to talk with Scott Horsley, who is an NPR correspondent. He covered the President and executive office for two different administrations, which essentially means he covered the White House both when it was on the ground and when it was in the air. Scott described to me what it was like to fly on Air Force One as part of the press corps.

You have had the opportunity to fly on Air Force One on more than one occasion, correct?

Scott Horsley:

Oh yes, many times, and it never gets old. And something I always tell my own colleagues if they're traveling on the plane for the first time is, "Take your time. Enjoy the view." The best part of flying on Air Force One is walking up to the plane at the beginning, because it's such a beautiful, beautiful 747. It's got the United States of America painted on the side. And I always tell them, "Don't do the journalist thing where you try to pretend you're too cool to be awed by something," because everybody is awed by it. There's no shame in taking a moment or even taking a selfie with the plane in the background.

Emily:

Sure. I think the only times most of us have the experience of boarding a flight from the tarmac is when it's a really small airplane.

Scott Horsley:

Yeah. You don't have to duck your head going into this one like you would on a little puddle jumper.

Emily:

Right. What is the experience once you're inside that press cabin?

Scott Horsley:

In some ways, once you're on the plane it's not as distinct from being on a commercial flight. The seats on Air Force One are all first class seats in the sense that they're pretty wide seats and there's a lot of legroom. The flip side is, at least in the press cabin, there's not a lot of overhead bin space and there's no checked bags.

Emily:

There's no checked bags?

Scott Horsley:

Whatever gear you're taking, you have to lug it on yourself.

Emily:

So, even on Air Force One you have the same challenge that we do? We're all fighting for overhead bin space?

Scott Horsley:

Well, there's no fighting. The TV crews commandeer it and the rest of us make do as best we can.

Emily:

So, do you guys have assigned seats or is there a scramble for the best seat in the house?

Scott Horsley:

No. The seats are assigned by role. The press corps that travels on the plane is a press pool, so there's one TV crew, one radio crew, one print reporter, three wire service reporters, certain photographers. So, all the seats are assigned by role. The radio reporter, for example, always sits in the third row on the aisle with the AP reporter next to us in the window seat.

One thing you never hear, I hope I won't get anyone in trouble, there is no safety briefing. And I have stood through many a landing. The seat belts are off and everyone is grabbing their coats and gear as soon as we touch down because as soon as the plane does stop, the press corps will sprint out the backdoor of the plane to get in position to record the President coming out the front door.

Emily:

Is there anything that you've ever seen, whether it be on The West Wing or some other drama that we see on television or in the movies, where you've been like, "That's not what it's like on Air Force One."

Scott Horsley:

Air Force One the plane is more like Air Force One the movie than the actual West Wing is like the West Wing TV show. I think Hollywood does a better job of replicating Air Force One than many other aspects of the White House.

We have TV monitors in the press cabin, and there was a movie one time... It was not the movie Air Force One but was a movie about the President that featured Air Force One, and Air Force One actually got blown up in the movie.

Emily:

Oh, jeez.

Scott Horsley:

There's something surreal about sitting on Air Force One and watching a Hollywood replica of the plane get blown up on the screen in front of you.

Emily:

That seems like a strange choice.

Scott Horsley:

Yes.

Emily:

So, I want to pivot a little bit here. I was talking with my co-hosts, Matt and Nick, and we were talking about some of the quirky foods that past presidents have requested always be on Air Force One. And in some cases stay off of Air Force One, like President Bush with the whole broccoli thing. So, what's the lowdown on the food situation these days?

Scott Horsley:

There's always a bowl of fruit and also some candy in the press cabin itself, waiting for us when we get on. And sometimes they'll pass out those signature M&M boxes that have the President's autograph on them.

Emily:

Is this a thing? I have never heard of signature M&Ms.

Scott Horsley:

That's one of the signature itself that the President gets, these custom M&M boxes. The M&Ms are just normal M&Ms I think, both plain and peanut, but they-

Emily:

Are they red, white, and blue?

Scott Horsley:

No, they're normal colors.

Emily:

They're just regular colors?

Scott Horsley:

But they come in a box that has the autograph of the President.

Emily:

Sure. So, are you allowed back in the galley? Is there sort of a serve yourself snack bar situation or you have to wait to be served?

Scott Horsley:

We're allowed back in the galley, but it's not a buffet style. We sit in our seats and they bring us our food. If you're anticipating that maybe you're going to have to jump up and interview the Press Secretary, you might carry your tray back to the galley just to make sure that's out of the way before you have to do that.

Emily:

Sure.

Scott Horsley:

The food on Air Force One though, I have to say, it is more hearty than gourmet: hearty stews, and soups, and pasta dishes.

Emily:

What's the best and the worst that you've had?

Scott Horsley:

I remember having chicken and waffles on a flight home from Afghanistan.

Emily:

Serious?

Scott Horsley:

Yeah. We had taken a secret flight with Obama to Afghanistan. It was secret until we got there. And on the way home, I guess as a sigh of relief, they fed us with chicken and waffles. Probably the fanciest meal I ever had on Air Force One was steak and lobster. There are some vegetarians in the press corps, and they suffer a little bit. I did have an opportunity to talk with Michelle Obama one time, who said she was always encouraging the AF1 crew to maybe serve some lighter and healthier fare.

Emily:

You mentioned that flying on Air Force One just never gets old. Is there something specific about it that just never gets old?

Scott Horsley:

When you touch down in that plane, even if you've done it for 10 days in a row, you can't ever forget that the people who see that plane coming in for a landing with United States of America written on the side, and whether it's voters in some rural part of America who are at a hanger waiting to greet the President during a campaign season, or villagers in Ghana who have come out to see the President making a trip to Africa, when they see that plane coming down and they know who is on board and everything it represents, that's pretty special. And it's a rare privilege to at least have a window seat or an aisle seat in the back of that plane.

Emily:

So, Scott's given us a really good idea of what it's like to fly on Air Force One, and specifically from the back of the plane. But what's it like to be in the driver's seat flying a presidential aircraft?

Nick:

That's got to be a lot of pressure, right?

Emily:

A huge amount of pressure.

Nick:

Let me introduce you to my friend Matt Howard. He didn't fly Air Force One, but he did fly Marine One, the President's helicopter, for four years during the Clinton and Bush two presidencies.

Matt Howard:

So, I was a copilot when President Clinton was in office, and I became a Marine One when President Bush was in office. Marine One, as it is generally known, is the aircraft that is actually flying the president at that moment.

Nick:

Does the President call you by your name, your rank, or your call sign?

Matt Howard:

Most of the time the way it worked is that when they come up the air stair, they do come into the cockpit, give the copilot a slap, and have a very short word with the Marine One pilot. When President Bush... The first time he came on and I was in Marine One, I said, "Welcome aboard, Mr. President," and he said, "It's my honor." And I thought... I didn't say anything, but I said, "You've got it backwards. We're the ones that are honored to do this." But that's generally the level of engagement that occurred.

Nick:

When was the moment that you knew you were flying the President? Not like when you knew it, but when you felt it?

Matt Howard:

The Marine One is the sole authority on the conduct of that flight, whether to continue or not continue based on weather, those decisions fall squarely on the Marine One's shoulders and nobody else's. There's nobody else that can make that call. The first time you sign for that airplane and you go out and fly it and you pick up the President and go, I felt it then, no question. I felt that, "Okay. Yeah, it's my responsibility now."

Nick:

What was your most memorable day as a Marine One pilot?

Matt Howard:

My most memorable flight was to the Wall Street pad on September 14th, 2001.

Nick:

Let's start with September 11th, 2001. What were you doing that morning? When did you find out?

Matt Howard:

I heard about the first aircraft flying into World Trade as I was driving in to base, Quantico town in the perimeter of the base. It's a bit of a throwback. It's barbershops and restaurants and a train station, and I went to my barber to get a haircut. And while I was in the chair while he was cutting my hair, we watched it on the TV in front of us. We watched the second plane fly into the World Trade.

Nick:

How did you react to that?

Matt Howard:

As the second plane flew into the building, it was a very, very strange and powerful moment because that's when you know the first airplane flying into the building was not a freak accident, because you don't get two freak accidents within whatever it was, 30 minutes. The military aviator says to himself, "This is an act of terrorism." And there's this big mirror in front of the chair and the TV is in front of this mirror, so we're both looking at the mirror at each other and looking at the TV. And we were just dumbfounded for a second. He leaned down and even though there's nobody in the shop, it's just the two of us, he said, "You need to go, don't you?" And I said, "Yeah."

By that time, my pager was starting to explode, and then I drove to the squad, which is very, very close.

Nick:

What were you feeling? You have one of the most specific, one of the most important jobs for a day like this. But what did you feel as all of this was going on?

Matt Howard:

If you're flying a plane, the most important thing you're doing at that moment is flying the plane. It doesn't matter what else is happening. You've got to wiggle the sticks in the right way to make sure you get on the ground without killing anybody. So, you can't be overcome by, "Oh my god," but shock was in this other huge compartment in my head.

Nick:

The President did not fly on Marine One that day. You flew over DC that day. What was that like?

Matt Howard:

It was very surreal. You fly up the Potomac from Quantico into the district. It's very easy. And when you get to Fort Washington down there on the Potomac, you check into Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport. And you've seen the volume of commercial traffic going in and out of there, so it's almost a nonstop barrage of instructions to commercial airliners and their crisp reply that they're doing quickly so that the controller can talk to the next guy. So, you're waiting for that second of clear air where you can key the mic and tell them who you are, where you are, and where you're going. And it was silent, which was weird, because there was no commercial traffic in the air.

Nick:

The President next flew on September 14th.

Matt Howard:

And it was just a matter of focusing on the task at hand, getting the President to where he needed to go. And it was eerie because smoke was still rising from the World Trade three days later.

Nick:

You could see that on approach?

Matt Howard:

Yes, yes. It was before we got to Verrazzano-Narrows Bridge, which is still a few miles from the East River and the Wall Street pad that you could see the smoke coming up.

Nick:

What was Wall Street pad like that day?

Matt Howard:

What made this day very different was... and just to step back for a second. When the boss flies to a place, one of the things that you have in place of course is ambulance and crash fire rescue. So, somebody from the local area supplies that capacity just for whatever contingency. But in this case, the only responders that were available came directly from Ground Zero, because that's where they all were, in the gray soot. That was an extremely powerful image. And some of the conversations that we had that day will be some of the most powerful memories of my life.

Nick:

What kinds of things did they want to talk about?

Matt Howard:

They just wanted to talk. You imagine what they'd been doing for three days. Very little sleep, very little food, gut-wrenching work. They're trying to recover people. Not save people at this point but recover people, and that's brutal work. First responders are a lot like Marines or a lot like other folks who were just... The best thing they do is make fun of each other, and that's kind of what they were doing to each other. That's what we were doing to each other. There were moments of laughter, and I remember one of the firemen saying, "That's really cool. I haven't laughed in four days."

Nick:

Were there any other significant memories related to that time that you have? Were there any other significant flights that you remember?

Matt Howard:

That American League Championship Series game between the Yankees and I believe it was the Diamondbacks. It filtered down to us that the boss was going to go to the Yankees game in the Bronx, Yankee Stadium, and he wanted to go to be there. And he was invited to throw the first pitch, so he did that. And it was just before sunset I think, and it's fall. It's late fall. It was a beautiful day. It was a good flying day. And I think we landed just right around sunset into that, and we got him in there. And when the President walked onto the field, the roar of that crowd is a memory that sticks to me now and always will because it was enormous. It was so loud, number one, and it just hit you right in the chest. And what the overwhelming feeling was there was no Republican, there was no Democrat. It was just, "Okay, that guy is my Commander in Chief, and right now we're one person." It was a really powerful moment. Everybody was together. I don't know why that always makes me lose my mind, but...

Nick:

You've talked about flying into the Wall Street pad, which is its own unique location to land an aircraft. What was your favorite place to land Marine One?

Matt Howard:

The South Lawn. You never get over that. Every time I went in there it was just, "Oh my god, I'm landing at the White House." It's just a neat perspective. You go by the Washington Monument, you come over the fountain, and you're hitting you're hitting your numbers, what your airspeed and your altitude should be. But just that view, it's tough to beat.

Nick:

You fly to and from the White House.

Matt Howard:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nick:

What was the first time you ever went inside the White House?

Matt Howard:

The first time I ever went inside was at the end of my tour to get by grip and grin photo op with the boss as I was leaving.

Nick:

Four years and you had never gone inside the building?

Matt Howard:

No. So, that might help cast aside the glamor of being a Marine One pilot. There is no, "Okay, so I'm having dinner with the President." No. I was never in the White House. That was the first and only time.

Nick:

So, grip and grin, that's I guess when you go in for your official photo with the President when you've worked in one of those jobs and you get the put-up-on-the-wall photograph to prove to your grandkids that you worked-

Emily:

You met the President one time?

Matt:

Yeah, that awkward sideways handshake where you're both looking at the camera.

Nick:

Marine One doesn't get as much screen time as Air Force One in your movies and your TV shows. They're really rarefied aircraft. They're not like the helicopters in the rest of the Marine fleet and they're not like civilian helicopters. They're extensively customized.

Emily:

They're bigger on the inside, right?

Nick:

Yeah, yeah. Fourteen people. And you've got the perception of the headphones and you have to speak into the microphone when you're on a helicopter because it's really loud?

Emily:

Yeah, yeah.

Nick:

Like the Magnum P.I. thing? Yeah.

Emily:

Magnum P.I.

Nick:

But on Marine One, you can actually talk at a normal volume. It's got so much armor, and insulation, and presumably possibly very plush carpet like Air Force One. They've got M&Ms in both places. I don't know why they wouldn't also have the cushy carpet.

Emily:

Are there really M&Ms on Marine One?

Nick:

Sure.

Emily:

I'll take Marine One or Air Force One. I don't need to be picky.

Nick:

So, what's the next big thing in presidential travel? Trains don't seem appropriate, maglev, hyper speed, bullet, or otherwise.

Matt:

I don't know. I'm a historian. I can only think about what's already happened.

Emily:

What's going to happen when we start putting boots up in space? Is the President going to go to space?

Nick:

Because we can't do one episode without talking about space, because it's the coolest.

Emily:

Because I'm here.

Matt:

I don't know. It's a big risk, sending the President into space. At what point will we be ready to do that?

Nick:

It's not about security at that point, it's about reliability of the machines, and rockets are just controlled explosions.

Matt:

Yeah, pretty much.

Emily:

I think the space tourism economy is going to have to be fully full swing before anybody's ever going to consider letting a sitting president on top of a rocket.

Matt:

Right. I think we'll see something more like the Teddy Roosevelt story where a former president goes to space before a sitting president ever does.

Nick:

That's it for this episode of AirSpace. AirSpace is produced by Katie Moyer, Jocelyn Frank, and Lizzie Peabody.

Emily:

Mixed by Tarek Fouda. Follow us on Instagram at AirSpace Podcast.

Matt:

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Speaker 1:

From PRX.