



# Deadlines Past: Forty Years of Presidential Campaigning: A Reporter's Story

*Walter Mears*

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For a reporter, a presidential campaign is the Olympics of political coverage, and an assignment to cover it is a front-row ticket from the trial heats to the finals. I had tickets from 1960 until 2000." --Walter Mears

Walter Mears had an insider's edge-and he made the most of it by serving newspapers and their readers around the country with some of the best presidential campaign coverage to see print. The Pulitzer Prize winner also witnessed enough of "the oddities, inside stuff, and impressions" during his 45-year Associated Press career that he ended up with a treasury of American politics and the forces that shaped them.

Fortunately, in *Deadlines Past* Mears finally commits his unwritten stories to paper. Readers are richly rewarded by his focus on the 11 campaigns he covered, campaigns that altered the way American presidents are nominated and elected, and how the media told the tales along the way. The changes were gradual from Nixon versus Kennedy through Bush versus Gore, but the historical significance of each matchup becomes very evident in Mears's detailed and engrossing narrative.

This poignant political recounting is illuminated by personal experiences and the observations of one of the finest AP reporters to ever file a story. Yet Mears never preaches any viewpoint about candidates or campaign history. He tells readers what he thought at the time, without telling them what to think. The results are a richly woven fabric of fact and reflection made by a penetrating eyewitness with nearly unlimited access to his subjects.

*Deadlines Past* is destined to become a classic in the political genre, one of the most compelling examples of a hard-news reporter's life, and a captivating view of 40 years of American history.

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