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**Segal, Edward. *Whistle-Stop Politics: Campaign Trains and the Reporters Who Covered Them.* Washington, DC: Rock Creek Media, 2024, 342 pp., $29.95 (hardcover). ISBN: 979-8988645009** Reviewed by Vivian B. Martin, Central Connecticut State University martinv@csu.edu

Whistle-stop campaign trains are not something I ever thought I'd want or need to know anything about. I was vaguely aware that some politicians had done legs of their campaigns on trains long before they commandeered buses. Still, I did not ascribe any importance to it beyond viewing them as a publicity gimmick. Edward Segal's Whistle-stop Politics: Campaign Trains and the Reporters Who Covered Them quickly corrected my misimpressions. Segal, a longtime campaign manager and press aide to Democrats and Republicans, takes readers on a historical journey from the 1836 campaign of William Henry Harrison, the first presidential candidate to ride a train, to recent state and national campaigns, including Biden in 2020. As Segal writes, many candidates and reporters say the trains and greater contact with the public helped get some candidates elected.

Segal's interest in campaign trains began in 1984 when he, as press secretary to Mickey Edwards (R-Oklahoma), created a campaign train to increase publicity for the Congressman's run for re-election. After developing a campaign that helped put Edwards back in office, Segal began decades of research on campaign trains. Research in magazines, trade journals, books, and interviews with politicians, staff, and reporters helped fill in the history.

Americans were the first to blend campaign stops and trains. Whistle-stop started as a railroad term describing communities too small to merit a scheduled stop. Instead, the conductor would signal a requested stop to the engineer. As whimsical as the term may seem today, Segal reports the railroad operators, concerned about the pejorative connotations of "whistle-stop," stopped using the term for a while. Whistle-stop re-entered the language with Harry Truman's 1948 campaign aboard the Ferdinand Magellan, which was first converted for use by Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Truman famously held the Chicago Tribune issue with the Dewey Defeats Truman headline as he stood in the rear of his train a couple of days after his win.

The rear car, with a platform from which to deliver speeches, carried the candidate, according to Segal. A car for security personnel, press, staff, and railroad representatives was next, followed by two or three cars for the rest of the campaign staff and equipment such as a mimeograph machine, a lounge, a press room with typewriters and tables, three Pullman cars, a luggage car, and the locomotive. When the president rides a train, there is a special car with greater comfort and technology than in other campaign trains.

The train stops would attract thousands eager to hear the candidates. Sometimes, small or unexpected crowds turned out. About 200 people were waiting in Salisbury, North Carolina, when Eisenhower's train made a scheduled early-morning maintenance stop, shouting, "We want Ike." Eisenhower, clad in pajamas and a robe, greeted them. Mamie Eisenhower followed in a negligee and with her hair in curlers. Groggy reporters were caught by surprise, but this was rare. Reporters were usually ready to get into the crowd to find local politicians and others to quote for their next filing. The wire reporters worked in pairs to divvy up the labor. The print journalists handed their copy to a Western Union representative for delivery to Western's offices; television

reporters gave the film to a courier. Sometimes, reporters found themselves running after the train as it pulled out.

Some campaign train tours went smoother than others. As Segal learned from archives and interviews, reporters were displeased with campaigns that did not plan for luggage retrieval to allow time to do laundry. Reporters sometimes flew their laundry to a hotel coming up on the itinerary. Reporters could not shower on the train, but after a few days of not bathing, some rented a hotel room and took shifts getting a shower.

Timothy Crouse's Boys on the Bus will come to mind for many readers (veteran political correspondent Jules Witcover wrote the book's introduction). Reporters followed the pack as they do on many beats. Segal quotes from a memoir by Hobart Rowen, who was on Truman's press train in 1952 for Newsweek. As reporters banged out their account of Truman's speech on the typewrites in the press car, someone would yell out for a crowd count. Rowen writes: "The Washington Star's venerable Joseph A. Fox would star out a window for a moment, while we awaited his official call, and then sing out: "Make it twenty-five hundred—no, three thousand." And the rest of us would dutifully enter 3,000 in our stories."

Segal's explicit choice to tell the history in the words of people who witnessed campaign trains can be meandering and tires this reader, who prefers paraphrasing in more places. The stories do not always have much social context. Some anecdotes about discrimination Black reporters experienced at campaign stops remind readers of the world outside the trains. A Black reporter riding on the Adlai Stevenson train in 1952 was denied a room at a hotel in New Orleans, but reporters on Eisenhower's train did not have to worry about lodging because campaign staff arranged the schedule to allow Eisenhower and everyone traveling with him to avoid overnight stays in segregated Southern cities.

Segal has brought together many different types of sources, including cartoons and illustrations featuring the train, to fill a gap in knowledge about this practice. The book is more sentimental than analytical but still manages to inform. Whistle-stop will interest political junkies, journalism professors looking to add new material to their presentations, and people who simply like trains.