

Recent UA grad thrilled to work in White House

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Traveler Staff

■ It's a common sight at any presidential visit. The cheering crowds squirming to catch a glimpse of the president. News reporters scrambling for interviews. And the president himself, grinning widely as he extends an open hand to an eager onlooker.

For most people, a chance to shake hands with the president of the United States would be nothing short of a thrill. But what would it be like to actually work with the president, travel by plane with him and even plan out his itinerary?

Kris Engskov listens intently to President Clinton's directions during a trip to Martha's Vineyard last August. His job allows him to travel with Clinton and his entourage.

For almost a year, Kris Engskov has had a chance to find out. After graduating from the University of Arkansas in May 1993, Engskov was hired as a staff member for the White House Travel Office.

As one of six staff members in the office, Engskov said he helps coordinate President Clinton's various domestic and international trips.

"Our interaction is mainly with the press," Engskov said. "We deal with [the media's] movement

around the president and the movement of any other group of people in general. Real logistic."

Engskov said he accompanies the president on every trip, whether domestic or abroad. He said Clinton likes to do more traveling than former Presidents Bush and Reagan.

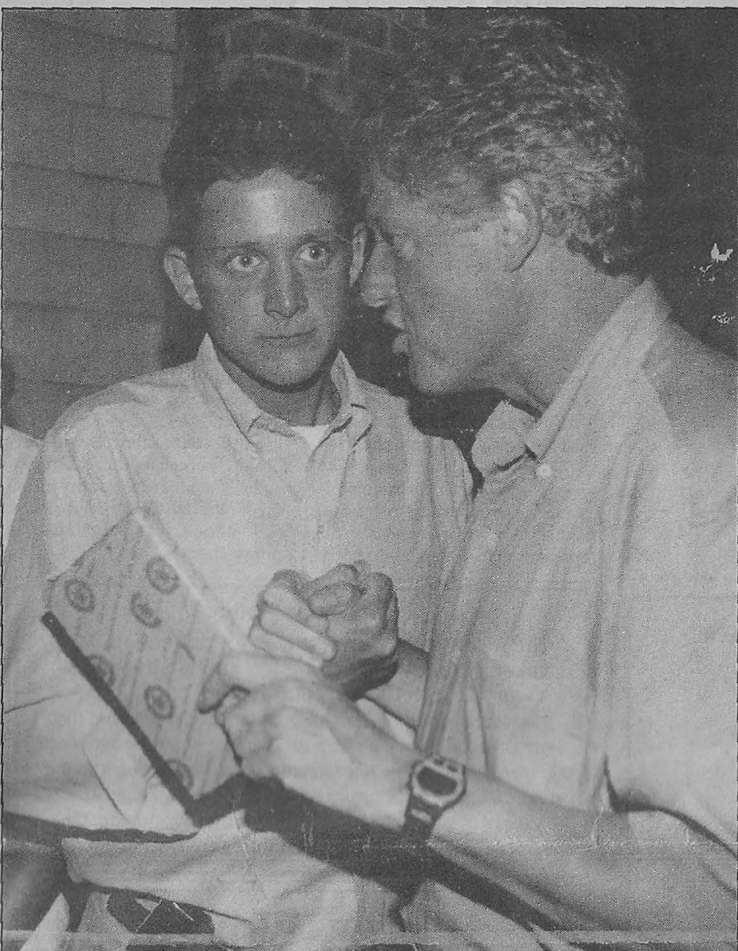
"Two or three trips a week is not unusual," he said. "A lot of these trips involve more than one stop. One instance, we went out to California on a health care event and then we went the same day to Houston to do another event. The next day, we had to get up and go back to Washington."

Since joining the staff last June, Engskov, 22, has coordinated 40 domestic trips and two international events for President Clinton.

"I never imagined I would get to work in the White House," Engskov said. "I thought a lot during my last semester of college what I wanted to do — go to law school, go to Washington or go back and run the [family] hardware store in Berryville.

"I always wanted to go to Washington and just see what it was like and what I wanted to do."

Engskov said his ambitions
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Students await completion

Engskov

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have always leaned toward politics. As a UA student, he was involved with the Young Democrats and worked in various local and state elections for the Washington County Democratic Party. He said an opportunity to intern for Sen. David Pryor two years ago inspired him and a friend to pursue jobs in Washington.

"We literally packed up our cars two days after graduation and drove up together," he said. "We didn't have a place to live, we didn't have a job, we didn't have anything. We lived in a motel in Arlington, Va., for three or four days until we could find a place. It was crazy."

Engskov said he immediately started looking for job openings in the government.

"There had been a few positions that opened up," he said. "It

was a lot of luck basically. They were shorthanded at the time and I came in at the right time. I just fell into the job."

He said the realities of adjusting to big city life and government employment offered their share of challenges.

"Things are running so fast," Engskov said. "You're trying to put so many things in your head. All the time, I'm constantly thinking about what I need to do. Instead of thinking the day ahead, I'm always thinking the hour ahead."

Engskov said the president himself often serves as a source of excitement. He recalled a time when an international visit nearly got out of control.

"We were in Prague, Czecho-

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—KRIS ENGSKOV
STAFF MEMBER, WHITE HOUSE TRAVEL OFFICE

slovakia, and all these people wanted to see the president," he said. "He walks across the bridge during an event with some local politicians. And then he just takes off. Down through the streets. Just starts walking. It's a riot. People are going nuts."

"Nobody could control how many people wanted to see this guy. It was just insane. Anytime there's a group of people, we stop and shake hands."

"[Clinton is] so energetic," Engskov said. "He wants to do so much. He's always going a thou-

sand miles an hour."

Although he has yet to get to know the president personally, Engskov said Clinton does try hard to familiarize himself with everyone on his staff.

"It's amazing how well he does know us, especially the ones that travel with him," Engskov said. "He's amazingly attentive to his staff, considering the amount of pressures that are on him to be attentive to other people."

"Everybody wants a piece of the president. He's got a lot of people to balance. We've heard stories about other presidents where the staff wasn't that important. Clinton certainly doesn't take his staff for granted."

Engskov has returned to Fayetteville only twice since mov-

ing to Washington.

On one trip, he watched his brother, John, a Razorback basketball walk-on, play against Texas Southern. Clinton attended that game.

"The president made a big deal out of my brother, so it was neat," Engskov said.

Despite his newfound success, he doesn't see himself working in Washington for the rest of his life.

"I want to be a country lawyer," Engskov said. "Come back to Arkansas and raise cows and be an attorney. I definitely want to come back to Arkansas. I really miss the state, and I don't necessarily like the big city."

For the time being, Engskov hopes to take advantage of all the opportunities available to him.

"Everything here is a real learning curve," he said. "Bill Clinton has been extra interested in young people. We are all extremely lucky to know him."

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