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## STEPHEN STUDDERT

**CAN HE HELP THE PRESIDENT  
BOUNCE BACK?**



# A FRIEND IN

*As a member of Reagan's inner circle he's seen it all—from the highs of Irangate. It's been a pressure-cooker for this energetic Utahn so close to the*

Studdert and President Reagan enjoy a humorous moment aboard Air Force One.



WHITE HOUSE PHOTO

# HIGH PLACES

Coming home from the highs of  
seat of power. BY LARRY MORRIS



**T**he day Ronald Reagan took the oath of office, he faced a welcome difficulty—choosing an official aide to coordinate the return of the hostages in Iran, who were released virtually the same hour as the inauguration. He chose Stephen Studdert, head of White House Advance, and that selection reveals much about the trust this Latter-day Saint enjoys and how he has participated in recent history.

"I hadn't even seen my office when I got that assignment," Studdert remembers. "Just three or four days later, the hostages arrived in Washington, D.C. It was an amazing experience." In fact, he can't talk about it without getting emotional.

Studdert and Vice-President George Bush rode in the bus with the former hostages to the White House. Hundreds of thousands of people lined the route to welcome the freed Americans. Many on the bus wept as they passed laborers, trees filled with ribbons, school children holding signs. At one point the bus driver was crying so hard that a Secret Service agent had to steer the bus. As they crossed the Potomac River a group of policemen in a small boat waved a huge American flag. Overhead, a train stopped on the trestle, workers stood on top of the train waving.

Of all the things that happened that day, two were unusually poignant for Studdert. "We were on a remote stretch of road where there weren't any people, and then we saw a black woman, I'm guessing maybe sixty years old. She was at the top of a hill, standing at attention, saluting as the bus passed her, tears running down her cheeks. The thought came instantly that that woman personifies everything about America.

"The second thing happened just a block from the White House. By this time the crowd had surged so close that the buses could hardly move. There must have been fifty people standing on top of two police cars, their lights flashing. Normally the police would have been pushing all these people back—you know, normal crowd control. But the policemen were leading the 200,000 people on that block singing 'God Bless America.' My deputy was on that bus with me, and to this day he and I can hardly talk about it."

The return of the hostages from Iran; the burial of the Vietnam veteran at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier; Presidential campaigns and national conventions; meetings with world leaders and prophets. Though at thirty-eight he's still a young man, Stephen Studdert has served as an adviser to two U.S. presidents. The farm boy from Spanish Fork, Utah never planned on anything like this.

*The Washington Times* gave this description of Steve: "Among the qualities that suit him to the job [head of White House

Advance] are the apparent ability to work non-stop with a positive attitude, and a sense of humor. Hardly a question is answered without a joke preceding his serious response. 'How much longer do you intend to do this?'

"'Oh, about three days.'

"'How were you chosen for this job?'

"'My phone number is the only one they knew.'" (July 14, 1982.)

Studdert's wife, the former Bonnie Beck, agrees with this assessment: "His drive and his sense of humor are his representative qualities. Once he sets his heart on something, he works hard and gets himself in a position where he can take advantage of opportunities."

Studdert's drive and sense of humor have served him well as he has grown accustomed to one pressure-cooker situation after another.

"I used to have a sign on my wall that reads, *Failure is not an option*," says the handsome, but stocky, Studdert. "And that is true when you're serving the President of the United States. Deadlines are absolute. If his plane is scheduled to leave Tuesday at 2:00, it's going to leave Tuesday at 2:00. You can't get to Tuesday and say, 'We can't have this report done today.' There is no room for failure. If I make a mistake, that mistake hurts the President of the United States."

Studdert joined the Reagan team during the 1980 campaign. For several years he served as Special Assistant to the President and Director of Presidential Advance. As the President's "advance man," he coordinated all of the President's travel schedules. Translated, that means he helped plan virtually every detail of a Presidential visit, including which city would be visited, where and when a speech would be given, what the President would say, where he would stay, who he'd meet, security, meals, transportation, and press coverage.

As head of Presidential Advance, Studdert traveled 500,000 miles a year, sometimes visiting several continents a week. Despite the pressure—or maybe because of it—he built a solid reputation as a hard and smart worker.

"He gets things done," says longtime White House associate Larry Eastland. "When no one else can handle a job, they send him in, and he takes care of it. I've never heard him say something cannot be done."

Studdert's dedication and ingenuity have earned him respect in high places. "I was sitting in his office when the Iranian arms controversy broke," Eastland says. "There were senior people calling him to find out

what was going on, and I mean *senior*." There are those who admit the President is relying *heavily* on Studdert for advice on handling the Iran affair.

More than once, Studdert's contacts have proved useful in his home state of Utah. Prior to President Reagan's campaign visit for Utah Senator Orrin Hatch, Steve came first by himself, looking for a safe place for an "old fashioned, down home" rally.

"The problem was, we wanted a big crowd, and you don't get a big crowd at 8:00 A.M. But what was the President going to do beforehand? A light went on in my head, and I said, 'Let's take him to an LDS welfare cannery.' The President loved the idea. He is very conversant with the Church welfare system and a strong supporter of it."

As a result, the President toured a cannery with President Gordon B. Hinckley and Elder Thomas S. Monson, and then—at a surprisingly successful rally—spoke to 40,000 people at the park.

"I've had many choice experiences with President Reagan," Studdert reflects. "One I remember clearly took place when he was attending a dinner in Washington. The dinner was running about twenty minutes behind, and all of a sudden I found myself alone in a holding room with the President of the United States. I said, 'Mr. President, how do you like being President?' And for ten minutes he told me how he liked it. He said, 'The one regret I have is that I'm so busy that I don't have enough time to think about the vision of America.'"

By his mid-twenties Steve had demonstrated leadership ability. At twenty-five he became police chief in Brigham City, Utah, the youngest police chief in the state's history.

"I've always believed in moving ahead and not crying over spilled milk," he says. "My grandparents [who raised him after his parents were divorced] were that way. They were pioneer stock."

Indeed, Steve is a direct descendant of Hyrum Smith, and the New England work ethic runs strong in the family. He grew up on a farm in Spanish Fork, Utah, and as a teenager bailed hay in the summer and worked a 4:00 A.M. milk route in the winter. Though his grandfather was well off, he left a Steve \$1 inheritance, thinking his grandson would be better off making it on his own.

Studdert graduated from Brigham Young University with degrees in public administration and police science. His first day there he met Bonnie.

"I knew he was unique the first time we met," she recalls. "He was so different from any person I had ever met. He was aggres-

sive. If he wanted to accomplish something, he found a way to do it."

Stephen and Bonnie were married their sophomore year, when he was only nineteen. After graduation, he worked with the Utah Law Enforcement Planning Agency. The planning agency evaluated the Brigham City police force and filed a report. Later the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (a federal agency) concluded there wasn't a police department of the same size anywhere in the country in worse condition.

"So," says Steve, "I got to Brigham City kind of by accident. After I worked on the report, I was offered the job as police chief, and I took it. They asked how long I would stay. I told them as long as the job was challenging. I stayed two years." When Steve left, the LEAA evaluated the department again, finding there was not a department of its size in the country being run more efficiently.

What accounted for the turn-around? "We tried to make the officers feel good about themselves and their profession," Studdert says. "We refocused efforts on delivering quality police service to the community. We also put new emphasis on training and education. We took every officer from around a twelfth-grade level to where many had college degrees and most others were working on them." He also made significant reductions in the department's budget. Such administrative skills inevitably led to new opportunities.

In 1975 Steve read a book called *Advance Man*. He was intrigued, and even told Bonnie he wanted to do that some day. But his interest was more than wishful thinking, and he made things happen. A friend of his, who also happened to be a personal friend of Gerald Ford, told the President about Studdert, and he was subsequently offered a job on Ford's advance team.

According to Steve, "It took Bonnie and me all of fifteen seconds to decide. It was the kind of rare opportunity I thought would come only once in a lifetime. Now it's come twice."

That first move to Washington, D.C. had an interesting sidelight. Before Steve and Bonnie announced their move, the bishop informed them he wanted to call Bonnie as the ward Primary president. They told the bishop they were moving, but he insisted that she was to serve as Primary president. Two weeks later they moved, and their first Sunday in the nation's capitol Bonnie was called as Primary president of their new ward.

Meanwhile her husband was keeping a hectic pace.

"We worked with the media," explains

Steve. "It was our job to create a strong, positive *visual image* of the President when he visited a city. While he may give a substantive speech on a particular subject, the text alone won't make the news. It must be accompanied by good visuals—photos or footage that show what happened. Our objective was to make page one of the newspaper every day and pick up minutes on the network news programs every night."

With that assignment came a multitude of decisions that go into determining what the President should say, to whom he should say it, and where it should be said. That then left thousands of details with the message, audience, logistics, security lighting, sound, seating arrangements onstage, order and length of speakers, location of news media and stage decorations for the staff to handle.

When President Ford left office, the Studderts returned to Utah, settling in Bountiful.

"We were happy in Utah," recalls Steve. "We swore we'd never go back to Washington."

Early in 1980, Steve got a call from Ronald Reagan's staff. And I haven't been home since."

Studdert worked on Reagan's personal staff through the campaign. After Ronald Reagan was elected, he agreed to stay on just through the transition, then just through the inauguration. Finally he accepted a permanent position.

Under Gerald Ford, Studdert had been one of several members of the advance staff; now the entire staff reported to him. He was traveling more than ever now. In a single week in 1982 he spent time in Tennessee, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, Paris, Rome, West Germany, East Germany and London.

"That was hard for me," says Bonnie. "I got depressed, and it took me a long time to get over it. I had a very hard time with Stephen on the road so much."

Meanwhile her husband became an expert at moving large numbers of people on the spur of the moment.

"I think President Reagan sees Steve as a kind of miracle worker," says Greg Newell, a Church member then serving as Director of Scheduling for the President and now Ambassador to Sweden. "I remember the 1980 Republican Convention in Detroit. Ronald Reagan had to hold a meeting outside the arena. That's a very complicated problem. You have thirty or forty motorcades, communications, press, security. The aides concluded that the move simply wasn't possible. Then they brought in Stephen Studdert, and he organized things in a matter of minutes. The one problem was that we had no buses to move the press corps until

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

March 2, 1987

Dear Miss Dew:

I am very pleased to contribute this letter to the feature which *This People* is doing on Steve Studdert. Steve is my friend, and I appreciate having this opportunity to express my gratitude for his loyalty and dedication.

Steve began working with me during the 1980 campaign. I was so impressed with his abilities that, after the election, I asked him to take on one of the most difficult and demanding assignments in the White House -- a position that called for discretion, resourcefulness, tact, and stamina. He has done an outstanding job.

He brought great credit to my Administration and met and surpassed the highest standards we expect of our government. And when his responsibilities involved travel abroad, his success won respect for our country and added immeasurably to our ability to win the cooperation necessary to achieve our goals. This, especially, is something for which we can all be grateful to Steve.

At each stop during the 1980 and 1984 campaigns, I was met with great warmth and enthusiasm. I know that Steve played an essential role in making this happen. Wherever he has gone on behalf of the White House, he has created goodwill because of his ability to deal with people. He never forgets those who give of their time and their talents, and he never forgets to let these folks know of my gratitude. Steve's kindness and his natural ability to bring forth the best in others allow him to return to the same people for help many times over.

Steve walked out of the convention hall and started hailing city buses. He convinced the drivers to take the press to the other building—they got to the center just in time. That's one of his most important abilities—he's able to persuade people to do things they otherwise wouldn't do. I haven't seen anyone who can tell him no."

On the night of the 1984 election, with President Reagan's landslide victory suddenly apparent, Studdert had to move the press corps from the Reagan home to the hotel. Again he marched into the street and hailed passing traffic. "I stopped the first five cars that came along and said, 'I've got to have your car; would you drive these people?' I'll never forget watching seven photographers climb into a lady's Ford Pinto. She didn't know what was happening to her, but away she went."

"Steve's good with people," says Eastland. "In fact, I don't know anyone who

knows more people. Someone asked him what he'd grab first if his house were burning down, and he said his rolodex. He knows absolutely everyone."

Naturally, Studdert also has weaknesses—some of which, ironically, are linked to his drive. "He doesn't get depressed, but he gets impatient with people who do," says Bonnie. When she struggled to cope with his frequent absences at first, he couldn't relate at all.

"Punctuality isn't his long suit," Greg Newell says. "He sometimes takes on more than his day will allow. I've sat by the phone before, waiting for Steve to follow through on something." Another associate agrees, "He overcommits; there are more things to do than he has time to do them."

In addition to seeing Steve as an imaginative, hard worker, White House staffers and newspeople also know him as a member of the Church. Once when he was flying on a

I am pleased that Steve now continues to serve his nation on my Export Council. He is working to expand opportunities overseas for American businesses and workers. In this position, as in any other he has held, Steve demonstrates his enthusiasm and an ability to work hard -- almost more than any man I know. I am fortunate to have his support and friendship.

I cannot close this letter without mentioning Steve's most valuable asset -- his wife, Bonnie. With her love and encouragement, Steve has been able to fulfill his commitments with the sure knowledge that she and their six wonderful children give him their wholehearted support. To Bonnie and the children I offer my deepest appreciation for the multitude of times they have made sacrifices so that Steve could carry out his duties. Steve's unselfish dedication to God, his family, and his country are the qualities that built America and make her the greatest country on earth.

Nancy joins me in wishing Steve, Bonnie, and their family every success and happiness.

Sincerely,

Ronald Reagan

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Over time the family has found how to deal with his schedule. "We've learned to roll with the punches," Bonnie explains. "The kids know that if Daddy doesn't show up for something, there's a good reason."

That doesn't mean he doesn't try to be there when his family needs him. It's not unusual for him to take a red-eye flight back home to be with a child or fulfill a church assignment. Once when he was on assignment in Cairo, Egypt, he returned to the States (over the objections of some), attended a Little League all-star game his son was playing in, then returned to Cairo to complete his business there.

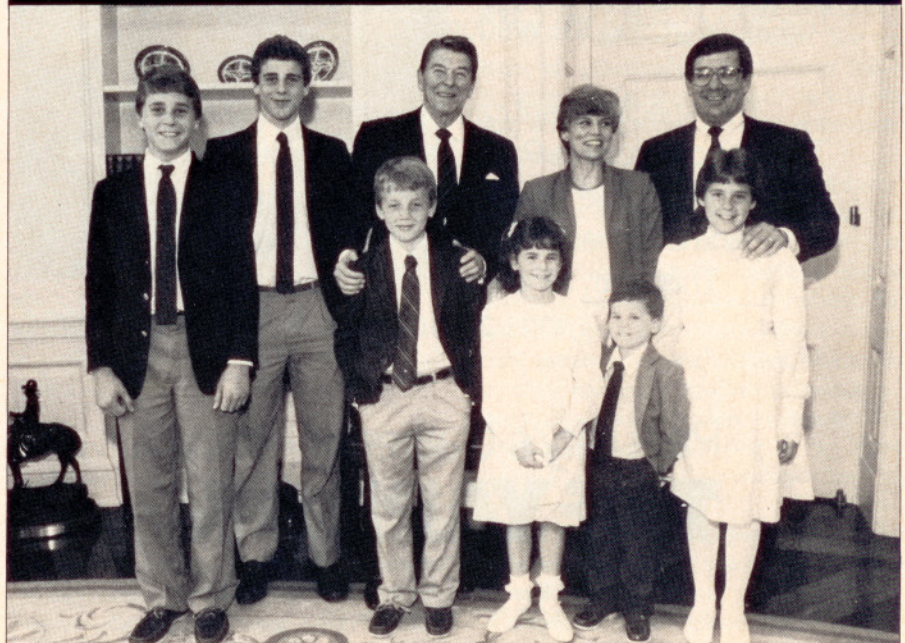
There did, however, come a time when Studdert felt he was traveling too much. After three years as Director of Advance, he resigned. The White House asked him to stay on, offering him a highly unusual *part-time* job. He now divides his time between private consulting and serving on the President's Export Council, a body of individuals who advise the President on trade policy.

Often questioned on what it's like to serve in the White House, Studdert replies:

On President Reagan surrounding himself with a number of Church members: "I don't think the President consciously went out of the way to hire Mormons. I think he said, 'These are the character qualities I want in these positions,' and found those qualities in LDS people."

On Ronald Reagan the person: "The man you see on television is the same man we see backstage. He is always genuinely concerned about people. He has a clear vision of

Studdert's relationship with the President has afforded his children unique opportunities—meeting the President, traveling abroad—that Bonnie describes as an education in itself.



press plane that accompanies Air Force One, the stewardess asked him what he would like to drink. Before he could answer, a well-known TV journalist shouted, "He wants milk—He's a Mormon!"

"I was once with the Premier of China," Studdert remembers, "and I declined tea when it was served. I told him why, and so instead of talking about the agenda, he wanted to talk about LDS missionaries. I've had many experiences like that."

Steve's position has brought many unique opportunities for his wife and six children.

"It's been wonderful for the children," says Bonnie. "All of them have been in to meet the President, and the four older ones have traveled with Stephen, ridden in motorcades and the works. It's been an education. The children have come to know that you don't have to be a Mormon to be a good person. They have wonderful nonmember friends who are outstanding kids."

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where America ought to be headed and focuses on that vision. If you asked me to name the most patriotic American, I'd name Ronald Reagan."

On the Iceland Summit: "Iceland in my mind was a great success. Some may ask how that could be. I think what President Reagan did will be commended in the long term because he rejected a short-term politically acceptable solution for one which will benefit future generations."

On dealing with the Soviet Union: "It's a very, very serious world we live in, with very high stakes. We should remember that Stalin and others said, 'We will bury you.' President McKay clearly warned us of the dangers of communism. The other side of the coin is that you have to coexist in the world. You can't spend all your time pummeling each other."

But when asked about his most memorable experiences, Studdert speaks of quiet, human moments, not political power struggles. He mentions accompanying Spencer W. Kimball and Ezra Taft Benson when they each came to the White House.

Another extraordinary event occurred in Salt Lake City in 1984, when President Reagan met with President Gordon B. Hinckley and the Quorum of the Twelve. "President Hinckley shared two scriptures from the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants with President Reagan. One had to do with the divine purpose of the American continent. President Reagan had similar feelings and related a poem on the subject. Several of the Brethren recognized the poem and nodded in agreement as the President recited it. The other scripture stated that the Constitution was divinely inspired, and again President Reagan said, 'I feel exactly the same way.' And again the Brethren were nodding their heads. That was a very special moment."

When 260 Marines died in Lebanon, President Reagan went to a base in North Carolina to honor them. Studdert arranged the President's visit, and had been there two days when he received a phone call.

"An elderly gentleman was on the line. I don't know how he got my name. He said, 'Sir, I know you're busy and I apologize for bothering you.' Then he started to cry. He told me he had a son who was with the Marines in Lebanon and who was missing. His son had not been declared dead; but he knew, and I knew, that his son was dead. He said, 'My son who is missing has a thirteen-year-old son. Is there any way he could see the President tomorrow and give him a poem he has written about his love for America?' The next day this man's grandson met President Reagan. Those are the kinds of things you never forget." ■