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CHAPTER 7

Herbert Hoover, Franklin Roosevelt, and the Candid Camera

What came to be known as candid camera photography appeared on the scene beginning in the late 1920s, made possible by smaller, more portable cameras that were capable of producing intimate photographs of seemingly unguarded subjects. Various called “miniature” or “mini” cameras, “hand cameras,” or “candid cameras,” these small devices allowed photographers to make images of political leaders in a whole new way. Stiff group poses illuminated by obtrusive, exploding flash power could now be replaced by close-ups of diplomats conversing in the quiet corners of meeting rooms or laughing over drinks at the hotel bar. Tapping into some of the same cultural anxieties that emerged after the introduction of amateur cameras in the late nineteenth century but amplifying and expanding them, miniature cameras transformed how photography depicted political leadership and deliberation.

When Herbert Hoover and Franklin Roosevelt encountered the candid camera, they found themselves face-to-face with new visual values that clashed with fragile norms of photographic decorum that had developed since the beginning of the twentieth century. The candid camera brought to the political sphere new visual values of access, intimacy, and energy. These new and seemingly democratic values reframed and, in some cases, collided

with presidents' investments in their political image. And they challenged the public's beliefs about how political leaders should be pictured. In the United States in the late 1920s and '30s, presidents Herbert Hoover and Franklin Roosevelt regularly grappled with, sometimes submitted to, and ultimately were forced to reckon with the candid camera's ways of picturing politics. An exploration of their encounters with the candid camera invites attention to a key period when norms of visual decorum were actively being renegotiated, with implications for both presidents and photographers. The Washington, DC, visits of pioneering German photographer Erich Salomon, known for his skill with the candid camera as "king of the indiscreet," serve as the backdrop for this chapter's discussion of Herbert Hoover. Salomon photographed Hoover twice, the first time by invitation at the White House and the second time at a White House Correspondents' Dinner, where the president was unaware that he was being photographed. Hoover's brief encounters with Salomon's candid camera—and the ensuing public discussions of Salomon's photographic practices—embodied the tensions inherent in this new mode of photography. The potential intrusiveness of the candid camera offered a seemingly more significant threat to Franklin Roosevelt, who with his advisers sought to limit the visibility of his disability. Although FDR's well-documented investments in "hiding" the extent of his disability have received most of the attention from historians, his relationship with photography was about more than fear of disability disclosure. Unlike Hoover, Roosevelt embraced the same visual values that made the candid camera so popular in the 1930s, though he did so in ways that sought to limit the impact of the candid camera on his political image. In a period when photography increasingly livened coverage of political discourse, the candid camera gave viewers insights into politics in ways previously invisible to them. Yet it also posed risks for politicians needing to adapt to changing assumptions about what was private and what was public.

The Rise of the Candid Camera

In November 1937 *Forum and Century* magazine published an article chronicling the history of candid camera photography. The article's author designated 1928 as the transformative year in which a new kind of photography emerged. Compared to what had come before, the new candid cameras were like an "express rifle had been substituted for a pea shooter."¹

If photojournalists' old, reliable Speed Graphics were the pea shooters, then the new cameras that first became widely available in Germany in the 1920s were the express rifles. Handheld with fast shutter speeds and a fast lens, cameras like the Ermanox and the Leica were so small compared to the Speed Graphic as to be hardly noticeable, even when mounted on a tripod. Like the Speed Graphic, the Ermanox used sheet film that required frequent loading and unloading. But its portable size and speed made it a very different camera. Advertised with the slogan "What You Can See You Can Photograph," it surmounted technical limitations of larger, slower cameras, making it easier to make photographs using only available light. The Leica appeared on the market alongside the Ermanox in 1924. It originally had been developed before World War I in order to test movie film, but those experiments had to be shelved during the war.² The Leica later found its own fame as a still camera. With the same fast shutter speeds and lenses as the Ermanox, but using 35 mm roll film that allowed the photographer to make multiple exposures in quick succession, the Leica quickly became a top-selling "miniature" camera. Production numbers illustrate its popularity. In 1927 one thousand Leicas were manufactured; by 1933 that number was one hundred thousand.³ It was one of the earliest and most popular 35 mm cameras, a format that dominated photography throughout the twentieth century until the digital age.⁴ Ultimately, photographers chose these cameras because they afforded new modes of photographic practice. Robert Hirsch writes, "By eliminating technical obstacles, the hand-camera permitted photographers to be in the flow of events as they unfolded, trapping moments from time, instead of being outside and having to forge happenings for the sake of the camera."⁵ In doing so, Hirsch continues, "the miniature camera leveled long-standing societal rules about what was private and what was public."⁶

Early on, the phrase "candid camera" referred to the technology of the new small cameras like the Ermanox or the Leica. But it soon came to connote visual values that quickly gained cultural traction, in both the trade press and the wider public, as the very definition of "candid." Writings of the period reveal that a change was happening not only in the technologies of photography but in the role of photography in public life as well: in the spaces for engagement with photographs, in the relationships that photographers could construct with photographic subjects, and in the visual qualities of the pictures themselves.

Trade publications, newspapers, and popular magazines of the 1930s chronicled the rise of the new visual values of candid photography, those of access, intimacy, and energy. References to access denoted the changing spaces where photography could be practiced. Writers and advertisers repeatedly emphasized that the new cameras were smaller and less obtrusive than larger cameras. This new portability made it possible for photographers to bring their cameras along with them during daily activities, not just when planning to pursue specific photographic assignments. As one advertisement put it, the Leica was “always ready for instant use regardless of place or climate.”⁷ Small cameras gave photographers access to move about unhindered in their environments; as one writer put it, the new miniature cameras were “perfectly, even wondrously, designed to give absolute freedom in expressing a new idea in photography.”⁸ Photographers recognized, valued, and even joked about this freedom. As one put it, “They made cameras so small that today when a man reaches into his vest pocket you don’t know whether he’s going to take your picture or offer you a cigarette.”⁹

Better access meant greater intimacy with photographic subjects. Public discourse of the period frequently used terms like “intimate,” “unposed,” and “revealing” to describe the kinds of photographs the miniature camera could make. Its small size enabled the miniature camera to insinuate itself into situations where other cameras would have been too obtrusive, thus allowing a visual intimacy with its subjects that larger press cameras never could. Writing in *American Photography* magazine, Charles Knapp pointed out that miniature cameras should be valued “for doing what the large camera cannot possibly do . . . that is, picturing a tremendously faster, more complex world in its intimate, frankly realistic moments.”¹⁰ Another writer in *American Photography* asserted that there was “one field of photography in which the miniature camera is unquestionably supreme—unposed, revealing, ‘candid’ photography.”¹¹ Intimacy in these examples was framed as synonymous with “realistic,” “unposed” pictures. For these writers, the candid camera offered a closeness, a familiarity, a blurring of the boundaries of public and private that made it possible for subjects to be pictured seemingly without affectation. For a photograph or camera to be “candid” meant in part to achieve a new intimacy with the photographic subject, even if—or perhaps especially if—subjects did not realize that they were being photographed. Yet while the notion of intimacy conjured a sense

of physical closeness between camera and subject, it might also entail an imprudent overstepping of the boundaries between public and private.

Access and intimacy were not all that the candid camera offered, however. Portability (with its resulting freedoms) and unobtrusiveness (with its resulting intimacies) mixed with fast shutter speeds to offer images that looked qualitatively different from other photographs. They bristled with energy—a movement, vividness, and activity that cameras like the Speed Graphic could not capture. Ansel Adams (who with his commitment to large-format photography was by no means a candid camera photographer himself) wrote that “with the advent of the Miniature Camera, photography of the *active moment* became feasible.”¹² Charles Knapp concurred that candid photography emerged because there grew “a general boredom with static and often frozen photography.” In a passage worth quoting at length, Knapp outlined the character of the candid camera in a way that vividly illustrated the intertwined nature of the candid camera’s visual values of access, intimacy, and energy:

What are the pictures which can be made only with a miniature camera or can be made best with a miniature camera? Obviously they are the close-ups of life, the significant fragments that flash past our eyes, the double-quick of today’s history, the change and evolution which makes even yesterday old stuff and tomorrow the great unknown. They are the brutality of a gangster’s face; the surrender in an old, bent back; the grotesqueness of public makeup, public eating, public love-making. They are the pictures of humankind caught up in a network of war, avarice, privation and disease. Pictures of people whose pleasures and sorrows are speeded up to the new tempo. They are sentimental, sardonic, humorous, factual, insulting, complimentary . . . but always they are authentic because the miniature camera can best hold up the mirror to life.¹³

In this passage Knapp rhetorically performed the qualities he ascribed to the candid camera itself. Piling vivid example upon vivid example, Knapp used strategies of accumulation, vivid language, and rhythm to illustrate the sheer detail and variety of what such images offered: access to “significant fragments,” “today’s history,” indeed, to “life.” That access was intimate, offering “close-ups” of the details of a face, a body, a pose—the gangster’s face, the elderly person’s “bent back,” the “grotesque” things people do in public when they think they are unobserved. Finally, perhaps for Knapp most importantly, the candid camera offered energy—“fragments that flash

past our eyes,” the “double-quick of today’s history,” “pleasures and sorrows . . . speeded up to the new tempo.” Such language emphasized movement: blurriness, lack of focus, speed.

As understood by practitioners and audiences of the time, then, the candid camera had tremendous capacity to transform the possibilities for photography. It enabled access to different spaces, offered a greater intimacy with photographic subjects, and imbued photographs with an energy that seemed to capture something essential about the whirlwind pace of contemporary life. It seemed both to capture and to create a new visual field for the modern age.

By the mid-1930s, what we might call the rhetoric of the candid camera circulated widely in popular culture. Camera clubs held “candid nights,” where photography enthusiasts would get together to make pictures.¹⁴ In 1940 *Life* magazine reported that the Junior Chamber of Commerce in Long Beach, California, had chosen its very own “Miss Candid Camera,” at whom eager amateurs could aim their lenses.¹⁵ Movies and novels tapped into the candid camera ethos as well. For example, the 1933 Warner Brothers film *Picture Snatcher* featured James Cagney as a former gangster turned newspaper photographer, and *Jimmie Drury: Candid Camera Detective* presented a young lead character who used his candid camera to solve crimes. One mystery novel series even included photographs in the text itself, promising readers “candid camera clues” in the pictures that would help them solve the mystery.¹⁶ Within ten years of its appearance, the candid camera was more than a photographic technology; it was a permanent feature of 1930s visual culture, familiar to and valued by U.S. audiences for its visual values of access, intimacy, and energy.

Perhaps no photographer’s work embodied these values better than one of its earliest and most lauded practitioners, Erich Salomon. The pioneering “candid cameraman,” who traveled in circles elite enough to bring him to the United States in the early 1930s to photograph the U.S. president, is recognized today as the first photographer to penetrate previously closed political spaces. In fact, the term “candid camera” purportedly was coined in the *London Graphic* in 1929 to describe his work.¹⁷ Salomon’s photographic work in Europe and later in the United States—where he photographed sitting president Herbert Hoover and future president Franklin Roosevelt—moved the new visual values of access, intimacy, and energy into political spaces where they would inevitably clash with ideas about photographic

decorum. The man whose photographic subjects nicknamed him “king of the indiscreet” would use his camera to activate tensions between public and private.

King of the Indiscreet

Erich Salomon came to photography via a circuitous route. Born into a wealthy Jewish family in Berlin, he studied zoology and engineering before completing a law degree at the dawn of World War I.¹⁸ He served in the German army during the war, was captured, and spent four years in a French POW camp. As a result of the war, Salomon’s family lost all of its money, so he had to earn a living for himself. After a number of failed ventures, Salomon ended up in 1925 working for the top German publishing company, Ullstein. Among other magazines, Ullstein published the *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung* (or *BIZ*), recognized today as the first of the picture magazines and one of the primary inspirations for *Life* magazine in the United States.¹⁹ Salomon was put in charge of billboard advertising, and that is when he began making photographs for the first time. Because he felt standard cameras were too heavy, he began to use an Ermanox. He later switched to the Leica in 1932.²⁰

Salomon found he preferred operating the smaller camera and that he was good at exploiting its advantages and minimizing its disadvantages. In 1928 he convinced the *BIZ* to let him cover criminal trials for the magazine.²¹ Photography was not allowed in courtrooms, but Salomon learned to hide his camera in his hat, cutting out a small hole for the lens, or in a briefcase, where he installed levers that he could manipulate to release the shutter.²² The photographs he produced of these trials were sensational and popular; no one had seen courtroom drama unfold in a news photograph before. By 1929 Salomon had taken up photography full-time. His specialty quickly became the photography of diplomacy. According to his son Peter Hunter, before Salomon, “photographs of these events were nearly always stiff and posed, devoid of life. The underpaid news photographer, out to get a serviceable shot, usually returned with pictures of rigid diplomats trying to hold a pleasant expression in the midst of an explosive flash of powdered magnesium.”²³ By contrast, Salomon made unposed images of unguarded diplomatic conversation, capturing the rhetorical work of men wrestling with the creation of a new world order.

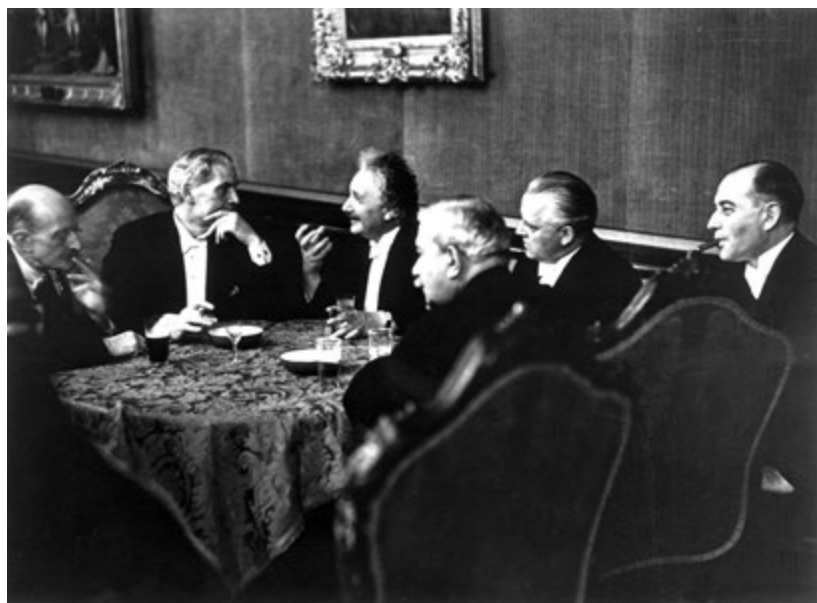


Figure 7.1: Erich Salomon, “British Prime Minister Ramsey MacDonald meets Professor Albert Einstein, Berlin, 1931.” (bpk Bildagentur/Berlinische Galerie/Art Resource, New York.)

Salomon fit in at these international events, where he would work quietly around the edges of a room, surreptitiously photographing both major and minor European leaders. It helped that he spoke French fluently from his time in the POW camp and that his family background gave him the bearing of a cosmopolitan gentleman. According to his son, “He always dressed correctly” and “often he would hire a limousine and arrive in the manner of a minor dignitary.”²⁴ Salomon figured out how to time his arrival at events so that no one would scrutinize him too closely. Because he used tools like a remote-release shutter, and because miniature photography did not require the large flashbulbs required of the Speed Graphic, he worked quickly and quietly.

Eventually the statesmen and diplomats figured out what he was doing when his compelling images began to be published in European newspapers, and many embraced him. The diplomats liked Salomon’s pictures because they illustrated the behind-the-scenes labor of diplomacy and humanized the stern-faced men leading the discussions. French prime minister Aristide Briand famously labeled Salomon the “king of the indiscreet” and “reportedly once said, ‘There are just three things necessary for a League

of Nations conference: a few Foreign Secretaries, a table, and Salomon.”²⁵ (Briand liked one of Salomon’s candid shots of himself so much that he asked Salomon for six prints of it.²⁶)

Salomon’s early European photographs exemplified the new rhetoric of the candid camera. His ability to blend in, combined with the portability and small size of his technology, gave him unprecedented access to spaces few had seen. His images of diplomatic events regularly featured small groups or pairs of subjects in close conversation, creating the impression that Salomon was in close physical proximity to his subjects, close enough to eavesdrop on their important but informal conversations. Because he made them with a miniature camera using available light and avoided stuffy formal settings, Salomon’s photographs embodied the energy of those “double-quick” of today’s history” celebrated by Charles Knapp.

The new political photography interested media outlets in the United States. At the height of his fame in Europe, Salomon made his way across the Atlantic on the dime of Henry Luce, publisher of *Time* and *Fortune* magazines. In May 1931 the recently launched *Fortune* published a thirteen-page photo story on William Randolph Hearst, with Salomon’s photographs of Hearst, his “castle,” and celebrity guests.²⁷ In November of that same year, *Fortune* published a five-page layout of Salomon’s diplomatic images. The piece opened with an encomium to the powers of the candid camera: “As a historic document, FORTUNE presents in the following five pages the premiers of Europe’s great powers as they are. None of the pictures was posed. In most of the pictures the subjects were completely unaware that they had been taken at all, for a secret camera was used, requiring no artificial illumination.”²⁸ *Fortune* invoked the rhetoric of the candid camera to highlight Salomon’s art: terms like “as they are,” “completely unaware,” and “secret camera” gave the reader a sense of eavesdropping on political power brokers in action.²⁹ Throughout 1932, portfolios of Salomon’s work appeared in *Fortune* in nearly every issue. Among other topics, he turned his candid camera on residence life at Harvard University, the House Ways and Means Committee, and Washington, DC, social events such as a party at the Italian embassy and the “Bachelor’s Cotillion” at the Mayflower Hotel.³⁰ During this same period, Salomon’s candid photographs of American society leaders, politicians, and activists also regularly appeared in other U.S. publications such as the *New York Times* and *Vanity Fair*.³¹ *Time* praised his “photographs of the great as they really are, working, talking, eating,

yawning.”³² During that year Salomon took what today is still the only photograph made while the Supreme Court was in session; he purportedly got it by putting his arm in a sling and hiding the camera there.³³

Those who encountered Salomon’s images recognized the distinctiveness of their new visual values and celebrated the way they reframed ideas about public and private. With his elite background and cosmopolitan bearing, he appeared to have come straight from central casting, framed by many who wrote about him as a figure whose reputation for prudence would absolve him of any indecorous photographic behavior. *Fortune* wrote of him: “Dr. Erich Salomon’s personality is a touchstone which admits him, without indiscretion, to even the most eminent private sessions. His tiny unseen camera continues to record contemporary history in the making.”³⁴ While the press wrote rapturously about Salomon’s camera, regularly describing it not only as “tiny” and “unseen” but also as “secret” and “privy,” the impression conveyed of Salomon himself was that of a man above reproach.³⁵ Even when *Fortune* wrote of his stolen photograph of the U.S. Supreme Court, “Photographs by Dr. Erich Salomon . . . have always been noteworthy as intimate documents of our times,” the intimacy Salomon achieved was still cast as somehow discreet in its informative “noteworthiness.”³⁶ Ultimately, those U.S. news outlets that wrote about and published Salomon’s photographs walked the fine line of embracing the candid camera’s new, sometimes transgressive visual values while at the same time emphasizing the decorousness of their producer. The *New York Times* noted of Salomon’s work, “Usually he catches them in moments when they are unaware that the camera’s eye is upon them. He seldom takes a posed picture. He gets his subjects in action.”³⁷ While the language of capture (“catching” and “getting”) and references to subjects’ lack of awareness raised the old specter of the camera fiend, the candid camera’s potential for imprudence was framed as somehow tamed by the prudence of the celebrity cameraman himself. Even though Salomon was known for skirting the rules, the “king of the indiscreet” remained somehow above reproach. This quality would help him gain access to the president of the United States.

Herbert Hoover and the Press

Herbert Hoover did not like cameras, whether candid or otherwise.³⁸ First Lady Lou Hoover apparently was even warier. A White House press

photographer recalled that “Mrs. Hoover had a rule that no photographer could come within fifteen feet of her husband to make a picture.” This was because the president wore high collars on his shirt, which she felt made his double chins even more pronounced.³⁹ Hoover, a devoted fisherman, also famously banned the White House press corps from covering his fishing trips, despite his aides’ desperate desire for the president to be shown as a “regular guy.”⁴⁰

Herbert Hoover inherited a mature and structured White House press corps, and he adopted what Stephen Ponder labeled an “adversarial” relationship with the press.⁴¹ Photographers and others in the press initially were surprised by President Hoover’s reluctance to engage them. When leading food relief efforts after World War I and then in the 1920s as secretary of commerce, Hoover embraced modern publicity methods and maintained good relationships with the press. As commerce secretary, Hoover met routinely with reporters and used a clipping service to follow his mentions in the press.⁴² Hoover was also the first president who allowed reporters to quote him directly. Years earlier, the common phrase “White House spokesman” had been invented during Theodore Roosevelt’s presidency as a way for reporters to communicate what they learned from the president without attributing the information directly to him in the form of a quote.⁴³ But contrasts in personality and circumstances challenged Hoover’s ability to build a good relationship with the press. The deepening of the Great Depression made that relationship worse. By 1931 whatever positive relationships with the press that might have remained from earlier years frayed amid the devastation of the Depression. Furthermore, that Hoover ascended to the presidency at precisely the moment when miniature photography emerged added additional challenges. Not unlike John Quincy Adams and the daguerreotype, Hoover and the candid camera would not easily mix. Nowhere was this more evident than when the president met Erich Salomon.

President Hoover Meets the King of the Indiscreet

Crisis put Hoover and Erich Salomon together in the same room in October 1931. Throughout that year, European nations had tumbled into economic disaster, which affected hopes for a speedier U.S. recovery. That summer Germany defaulted on its war reparations payments, and Hoover proposed

an eighteen-month moratorium on the payment of war debt to try to avoid a world financial crisis.⁴⁴ European nations agreed (the French being the main holdouts), and eventually Congress passed the moratorium (which did not, in fact, do much to avert crisis). After the French signed on in October 1931, French prime minister Pierre Laval visited the United States and met with Hoover. The *Washington Post* reported that Erich Salomon was in town as well; the photographer traveled to Washington from Munich “to get intimate pictures of the two statesmen in conversation.”⁴⁵ But Hoover turned out to be elusive. The *Post* reported that although Salomon had made “several interesting physiognomic studies” of Laval and others at a Washington luncheon, he was “turned away from the White House on the night of the Hoover-Laval meeting.”⁴⁶

Upon learning of the White House’s rejection, Laval appealed to Hoover directly to allow Salomon to photograph them at their next meeting. Hoover agreed.⁴⁷ As *Time* magazine reported the story:

Photographer Salomon was led down a corridor. . . . There he found Premier Laval and President Hoover, deep in debt talk. Without disturbing their easy poses, he set up his tripod, took pictures while Premier Laval waggled an excited finger at the President, spoke rapidly in French. Because President Hoover does not thoroughly understand French, Secretary Stimson was present serving as interpreter. Discreet Dr. Salomon, busy with his camera, took pains not to listen to the confidential conversation going on.⁴⁸

“Discreet Dr. Salomon.” “Without disturbing their easy poses.” “Confidential conversation.” *Time*’s account highlighted both the familiar language describing the candid camera and emphasized Salomon’s prudential behavior when photographing the two world leaders.

However, Salomon’s photographs from that meeting revealed something different. One featured President Hoover, Prime Minister Laval (both seated), Undersecretary of the Treasury Odgen Mills (standing at right), Secretary of State Henry Stimson (seated at right), and French financial expert Adéotat Boissard (standing at left) formally posing for the photographer, nearly everyone looking at the camera except for Laval and Stimson (who, because he was translating for the president, likely needed to watch Laval intently). More experienced with Salomon’s candid camera as a result of their encounters in Europe, Laval seemed to have given himself over to the idea that the photographs were supposed to seem unposed. Hoover’s



Figure 7.2: Erich Salomon, Prime Minister Pierre Laval with President Herbert Hoover at the White House, 1931. (bpk/Salomon/ullstein bild via Getty Images.)

nearly expressionless gaze offered a stark contrast to Laval's as he met the eyes of the viewer by looking directly into the camera. The body language of the two men varied as well: Laval leaned forward in his chair, hands folded, seemingly eager for conversation, while Hoover sat far back, with a casual but more reserved body stance—legs crossed and shoulders turned not toward his interlocutor but toward the camera. The overall impression the photograph gave was one of wariness, awkwardness, and uptightness—hardly the “easy poses” described in *Time* magazine.

Two other images from the same meeting achieved something closer to the ideal performance of the visual values of the candid camera. Cropped to focus just on the two leaders, one photograph depicted Laval and Hoover smiling at each other, though Hoover's smile was still awkward and forced. While Laval's body position remained unchanged from the previous image, Hoover's right arm moved down, making for a less affected, more casual pose. Most importantly, the gaze between the two men energized the space between them. A third image (referenced in the story from *Time*, above) featured Laval energetically wagging his finger at Hoover, a slightly



Figure 7.3: Erich Salomon, Prime Minister Pierre Laval with President Herbert Hoover at the White House, 1931. (bpk/Salomon/ullstein bild via Getty Images.)

out of focus hand gesture suggesting he was making an important point mid-conversation. By contrast, Hoover's body remained essentially where it was in the other two photographs, turned politely toward the visiting photographer in a three-quarter view.

Across all of the photographs, Laval seemed to know what he was supposed to do: avoid the photographer's eye and engage with the president in an unposed way. Laval had experience with Salomon's lens; he knew how to perform the visual values of the candid camera. But Hoover did not. Though his carefully moderated body positions and awkward smiles seemed decorous, by embracing a formal mode of portraiture Hoover ironically violated the very values of the candid camera that Salomon's presence at the White House was designed to exploit.

Tellingly, those who circulated the images seemed largely to ignore the content of the photos, claiming instead that the photos of the two men were ideal examples of those visual values. The Hoover-Laval photographs circulated in a number of newspapers and magazines, both in Washington, DC, and nationally. One image appeared on two separate occasions in the *Chicago Tribune*, with different cropping, each accompanied by a caption

that described the photograph as “intimate and informal.”⁴⁹ Two more photographs, including the “wagging finger” image, appeared alongside *Time* magazine’s report of the meeting, but editors cropped out Hoover entirely to share instead only a photograph of Laval. Not surprisingly, given its visual energy and the visit’s heated political context, the “wagging finger” photograph seems to have been the most popular. In addition to its appearance in *Time* and Washington, DC’s *Evening Star*, it was appropriated for the cover of *Time* a few months later when the magazine named Laval its “Man of the Year.” Cropping out Hoover entirely (a telling move in that dark winter of 1931), the magazine appropriated the photograph of Laval’s dramatic hand gesture in a painting depicting the French premier in the White House.⁵⁰ Captured by Salomon’s lens in mid-gesture, Laval emerged in the photo-cum-painting as the candid camera’s ideal subject: seemingly unposed, vibrating with bodily energy.

Salomon photographed Hoover again a few months later in March 1932, at the White House Correspondents’ Dinner in Washington. According to the *New York Herald Tribune*, the stag gathering of five hundred men included “music, skits, motion pictures made by the reporters, and no speeches.”⁵¹ The photograph Salomon made that night captured the president attending to the festivities while smoking a cigar. An open bottle—perhaps a bottle of Prohibition-era wine?—sat in front of him on the dais. By all accounts, Hoover was not aware that he was being photographed. Salomon made the photograph from three feet away, apparently by hiding his camera in a flower arrangement and releasing the trigger by remote control.⁵² White House photographers were not pleased with Salomon’s appearance at their off-the-record event. The minutes of a 1932 White House News Photographers Association meeting announced the appointment of “a committee of one to investigate the activities of Dr. Salomon, the German photographer who is residing at the Mayflower hotel and making a nuisance of himself at public functions.”⁵³ Framed in so many news accounts as the creator of intimate, secret, but discreet images, Salomon got slapped with a charge of indiscretion.

Despite the complaints, the image is, ironically, one of the best of Hoover as president. He appears focused, thoughtful, and prudent. As a candid camera portrait, it outshines the Hoover-Laval photographs, skillfully mobilizing the visual values of access, intimacy, and energy. Unposed and unaware of the camera, the president nevertheless is fully available to the viewer. As a result, unlike in the previous images, this Salomon photograph offers viewers intimate access to its subject. While it is unclear whether the star



Figure 7.4: Erich Salomon, “President Hoover at the annual dinner of the White House journalists,” 1932. (Library of Congress.)

hovering over the president’s head was a decoration or a trick of the light, it nevertheless gives the photograph additional energy and interest. Despite the White House press corps’ grumblings about Salomon’s “nuisance” practices, the photo secretly shot from a flower pot was soon taken up as a positive image of the president. *Fortune* used it in a pro-Hoover story a few months later, tightly cropping it in its July 1932 issue as a full-page image accompanying a long article called “The Case for the Administration.” Paired with a pro-Hoover story in a pro-business magazine, the photo of Hoover—with that star even more prominent and glowing above his head—arguably offered a more positive and prudential, if purloined, picture of the president than did other media images.

The candid camera and its new visual values of access, intimacy, and energy enlivened the visual field of photography in ways that challenged, and in some cases upended, norms of decorum. Previously subject to “camera fiends” in public places, presidents in the candid camera age now faced the prospect of becoming the unwilling subject of a photographer’s “privy” camera anywhere, at any time, even indoors, in contexts previously off limits or difficult to photograph. At the same time, presidents were expected to

cooperate in the rhetoric of the candid camera by performing these new visual values. Herbert Hoover's awkward engagements with the camera of Erich Salomon embodied the tensions between public and private inherent in these new demands. Unwilling to fully participate as a seemingly unaware photographic subject, Hoover bodily challenged the demands of Salomon's camera at a time when practiced inattention was becoming a dominant way of picturing political leadership. Ironically, at the same time that he rejected the candid camera's ethos, he simultaneously fell victim to its capacity for revealing, engaging portraits.

Salomon's presidential interactions did not end with Hoover. In May 1932 the candid cameraman photographed then governor of New York Franklin Delano Roosevelt as he and his wife, Eleanor, attended boxer Max Schmeling's training camp. News coverage of the presidential candidate's meeting with Schmeling did not mention the presence of the king of the indiscreet, but Salomon and a number of photographers captured the moment when the two men interacted. (Roosevelt pleasantly surprised



Figure 7.5: Unknown photographer, "Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt of New York, shaking hands with Max Schmeling, the World's Heavyweight Boxing Champion, during the Governor's visit to the Schmeling training camp," May 1932. (Bettmann via Getty Images.)

Schmeling by speaking to him in German.⁵⁴) While Salomon avoided picturing the disabled presidential candidate's lower legs, other photographers were not so discreet. For example, one photograph of Schmeling greeting a seated FDR was framed to reveal just a hint of one of Roosevelt's steel leg braces. While in the photographs Roosevelt appears unaware of the photographers, or more likely had cultivated the practiced inattention that Hoover had not mastered, that hint of a leg brace points to a visual vulnerability that candidate Roosevelt very much sought to surmount. That he famously did so by making himself more publicly visible constituted Roosevelt's mostly successful gamble with the candid camera.

FDR, Visibility, and the Press

The candid camera's visual values of access, intimacy, and energy carried cultural force well into the 1930s. Anxieties about the candid camera went with them too. Physically disabled since 1921 as a result of being infected with the polio virus, Franklin Roosevelt recognized the candid camera as a mounting threat when he returned to a public career after the early years of his illness. As a candidate for New York governor and later as a presidential candidate and president, Roosevelt and his advisers worked hard to divert public attention away from the fact that he could not walk on his own. But the story of FDR's engagements with photography should not be reduced to the well-trod terrain of how he and his advisers worked to "hide" his disability from the public or the extent to which the press colluded with him to accomplish that. For as much as Roosevelt sought to manage the hypervisibility produced by the candid camera's intrusion into political life, he also skillfully appropriated the very visual values the candid camera championed. While he manipulated the role the candid camera would be allowed to play in his relationship with the public, he simultaneously made himself visible to that public in other ways. Ultimately, what Roosevelt did to ensure his visibility was just as important as, or perhaps more important than, what he sought to keep invisible.

Hugh Gallagher's 1985 book, *FDR's Splendid Deception*, argued that Roosevelt's experience with polio significantly affected him every day of his life and should therefore be an integral part of any attempt to understand him and his politics.⁵⁵ Until the publication of Gallagher's book, most historians and biographers treated Roosevelt's disability as something over

which he had “triumphed” before becoming a major political figure, if they took it up at all.⁵⁶ One question that has dominated discussions of FDR’s disability is the question of the extent to which he and his advisers actively sought to deceive the public about polio’s impact on him. Not surprisingly, photography played an important role in these assessments. Very few photographs, even fewer that circulated in print during his presidency, depict Roosevelt in a wheelchair, being carried to and from the car, or walking with crutches—despite the fact that all of these things were daily occurrences. The absence of visual reminders of Roosevelt’s disability, plus evidence that photojournalists and newsreel cameramen agreed not to photograph FDR at these moments, suggested to some historians the whiff of conspiracy. A survey of photographers and photo editors conducted for a 1946 study, for example, reported that photographers had been asked explicitly not to photograph Roosevelt using crutches or a wheelchair or being carried.⁵⁷ Yet scholars disagree about the extent to which it is appropriate to call what FDR and his advisers did a “cover-up.” On the one hand, considerable evidence shows that Roosevelt and his advisers sought to squelch rumors about his health and the extent of his disability. On the other hand, the president’s health was a topic of public discussion in the media, FDR himself actively and publicly advocated on behalf of those affected by polio, and according to one scholar, arguably he “was more candid about his health than Kennedy was in 1960.”⁵⁸ Arguing against the extremes of “cover-up” and “everybody knew,” Matthew Pressman suggests that it makes more sense “to consider FDR’s efforts to control his image as spin, rather than as a cover-up.”⁵⁹

Davis Houck and Amos Kiewe offer the most substantive exploration of how candidate Roosevelt worked behind the scenes and in public to address the political impact of whispering campaigns about his health. They point out that these strategies were not so much about what Roosevelt “hid” as what he did in the open to shape and address the inevitable concerns about his fitness for office. They argue that Roosevelt used visual strategies that “took two main forms: an ability to walk or give the appearance that he could walk and extensive travel by automobile, train, and airplane.”⁶⁰ By combining these strategies with verbal communication emphasizing his own health, Roosevelt sought to make his disability invisible by becoming hypervisible during his campaigns.⁶¹ For example, ahead of the 1932 campaign, he and his advisers commissioned a friendly Republican operative,

Earl Looker, to write an ostensibly objective piece for *Liberty* magazine that addressed the question of whether Franklin Roosevelt was fit enough to be president.⁶² (Not surprisingly, he concluded “independently” that FDR was.) During the 1932 campaign, Roosevelt’s advertisements then referenced the *Liberty* magazine piece and trumpeted the fact that an insurance company had offered FDR a five-hundred-thousand-dollar life insurance policy as further proof of his good health.⁶³

Throughout his political career, but especially in his campaigns for governor and president, Roosevelt traveled extensively and kept to a punishing schedule of appearances. During one campaign trip in 1932, he gave twenty-three speeches across thirteen states.⁶⁴ He even broke new ground by being the first presidential nominee to accept the nomination at the convention. With much fanfare Roosevelt flew to Chicago in 1932, communicating energy and vitality with the choice to travel by air.⁶⁵ From campaign appearances on the back of a train car (where, leaning heavily on the arm of one of his sons, the smiling candidate appeared to be able to stand on his own) to speeches at specially reinforced lecterns to facilitate standing, Roosevelt literally showed himself to the public so that they could see his vitality and stamina for themselves.⁶⁶ Extensive travel helped to create the impression that Roosevelt was not only healthy but also accessible and knowable in ways that previous presidents, especially Hoover, were not.

Roosevelt also used his charisma to great effect with the public and with a press to whom he offered regular access, hosting two press conferences per week during his presidency.⁶⁷ Accounts of his relationship with the press frequently mention his informality and friendly demeanor. A *New York Times* account of Roosevelt’s very first press conference as president, tellingly headlined “Enjoys Jokes, Allows Cameras,” said that the new president spoke “frankly,” “laughed heartily,” and “looked fresh and fit.”⁶⁸ Press conferences conveyed the impression of an accessible president and gave Roosevelt opportunities to directly counter his critics in the Republican press as he ingratiated himself with reporters.⁶⁹ Photographs revealed the president’s energy and charisma as well, especially when compared to his dour predecessor Hoover.⁷⁰ Roosevelt’s well-known visual expressiveness got a decidedly surrealist treatment in *Vanity Fair* magazine, which in October 1933 published a photo montage slyly called “A Laughing Cavalier.” The bizarre image featured a large head shot of FDR grinning at the camera and surrounded by dozens of smaller Roosevelt faces, each with a different,



Figure 7.6: “A Laughing Cavalier,” *Vanity Fair*, Oct. 1933, 15. (Condé Nast.)

almost maniacally charismatic, smile of its own. Sally Stein suggests the image could be read as a parody of depictions of Roosevelt that focused on his hands and head rather than on his disabled body.⁷¹ At the same time, the fantastical replication of so many Roosevelts arrayed around a central Rooseveltian grin pointed to the kinetic energy and hypervisibility of a new president who dazzled in the candid camera era.

Histories of FDR’s media savvy lean heavily on his use of radio, especially the addresses that came to be called “fireside chats.” Radio fostered intimacy like no other medium, and Roosevelt took good advantage. When he arrived at the White House, he already had extensive experience with the technology; he had appeared on radio as governor of New York and understood the

value of direct communication with Americans.⁷² Roosevelt grounded his radio persona in a narrative of familiarity, famously addressing listeners as “my friends.” His voice was often described as the key to his oratorical success. Professors of public speaking declared FDR’s voice to be “rich” and “melodious,” and one radio director said Roosevelt had “a voice ‘like honey syrup oozing through the steel filter that jackets the microphone.’”⁷³ Just as important, the content of his radio addresses relied on common words and plain speech to communicate complex ideas.⁷⁴ The fireside chats—thirty-one of them across his presidency—gave Americans a sense of having an intimate, personal connection with a president who came to them in their homes or cars.

FDR and the Candid Camera

Photography played a key part in both the New Deal and Roosevelt’s personal public relations strategies. Through the work of various “alphabet agencies,” chief among them the Resettlement Administration, or RA (later renamed the Farm Security Administration, or FSA), led initially by FDR’s close adviser the progressive economist Rexford Tugwell, Roosevelt championed the use of photography both to publicize the impact of the Great Depression and to chronicle New Deal efforts to alleviate it. Between 1935 and 1943, photographers working for the Historical Section of the RA/FSA made more than 250,000 documentary images across the United States, many of which have become the most famous photographs in U.S. history.⁷⁵ Other agencies, such as the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), the National Youth Administration (NYA), and the Works Progress Administration (WPA), regularly publicized their work via photography as well.⁷⁶ Roosevelt also embodied faith in visual methods through his own verbal rhetoric. He used visual language repeatedly, such as in his emphasis on the need to “face” and “recognize” the Great Depression in the first inaugural address and his reliance on metaphors of sight in the second inaugural address, including that speech’s most famous pronouncement: “I see one third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished.”⁷⁷

If the Roosevelt administration used photography to make the New Deal more visible, the president’s personal engagements with photography were more circumspect. FDR would not hide from the spotlight. He would be seen, but on his terms and according to an ever changing yet firm set of

rules. Roosevelt governed New York when the candid camera arrived and became an increasingly dominant presence in public life. By the mid-1930s both professional and amateur “kings of the indiscreet” relied on the visual access a miniature camera could provide. In response the Roosevelt White House worked to control the environment by implementing an ever tightening set of rules to govern photographers’ behavior. Yet visual control could never be absolute. Not all news outlets (especially those run by his political opponents) could be relied on to uphold the gentlemen’s agreement to refrain from photographing Roosevelt in ways that made the extent of his disability visible.⁷⁸ In addition, anytime the president was out in public, he was vulnerable to the candid cameras of professional and amateur photographers alike. While not all candid photographs of FDR were actually made with the miniature camera, nevertheless the visual values of access, energy, and intimacy that dominated the cultural moment posed a threat, one that required constant vigilance on the part of those seeking to control the president’s image. That vigilance was already in place before Roosevelt took office.

Entering his townhouse just days before his first inauguration, Roosevelt declined to turn and “wave his hat for the benefit of photographers,” earning praise from the *New York Times* for rejecting the dominance of the news camera. The writer opined, “Camera and sound-machine have brought their own kind of vividness into the news business, but they have also brought with them an element of the artificial, the rehearsed, the posed. There has been adjustment and concession to the requirements of the photographer.”⁷⁹ While the *Times* did not report how Roosevelt was physically entering the space—was he on crutches, or in a wheelchair, or being carried from a car?—the piece made clear that FDR was going to draw boundaries that other presidents, most notably the notoriously photo-happy Calvin Coolidge, had not. Roosevelt’s press secretary, Stephen Early, set the tone by establishing rules for photographic coverage by the White House press corps.⁸⁰ As described by Betty Houchin Winfield in *FDR and the News Media*, these rules included the following:

- photographers would not get exclusive access to the president for pictures; they would instead pool photo coverage so that all organizations had a fair shot at a good picture;
- photographs of the president with visiting dignitaries could be made “in proper poses only”;⁸¹

- photographers were not allowed to make any “candid pictures . . . not even at the press conferences, without special permission”;⁸²
- finally, “White House rules . . . prohibited shots taken of the president handling crutches or photos implying he had crutches or was being wheeled in his wheelchair.”⁸³

While historians tend to emphasize the prohibition of “disability” images, these rules illustrate that anxieties about the candid camera were about more than that. Prohibiting candid images in favor of “proper poses” was one way to protect the president from embarrassments that extended beyond the goal of keeping his disability from the forefront of the public’s mind.

Stephen Early’s rules evolved over time, often in response to photographic moments that he thought made the president look bad. For example, in early 1935 he announced that photographers would only be allowed to make a picture of the president once Early himself had given permission to shoot. The new restriction was in response to a photo of FDR rubbing his eyes after being subjected to the blinding light of multiple camera flashbulbs going off simultaneously. When the photograph circulated with candid camera-style captions stating that the president was “thinking over the farm problem,” the White House balked.⁸⁴ Early authorized the Secret Service to implement a similar rule a few months later. After what Early called “some decidedly poor photographs” of the president taken on his yacht, *Sequoia*, appeared, Early directed the Secret Service to keep photographers from making shots of the president until the Secret Service gave the okay.⁸⁵

In 1937 a number of issues related to Roosevelt and the candid camera came to a head. It was a trying year for the president politically. Emboldened by his second-term victory and frustrated by the Supreme Court’s rejection of New Deal programs, Roosevelt recommended adding an additional justice to the federal court system for every one justice over the age of seventy. If adopted, what came to be called the “court packing plan” would have given FDR the opportunity to nominate six new Supreme Court justices.⁸⁶ Presumably, these Roosevelt appointees would be amenable to the policies and practices of the New Deal. Roosevelt’s Republican critics in the media—most notably Robert “Colonel” McCormick, publisher of the *Chicago Tribune*, and Henry Luce, publisher of *Time*, *Fortune*, and *Life*—felt along with many others that the president was making an audacious power grab. Despite the ban on photographing the president in ways that highlighted his disability, in 1937 a handful of publications owned by his critics published photographs of the

president that showed his leg braces, pictured him using crutches, or, in one case, being pushed in his wheelchair.⁸⁷ The latter photograph was made on the grounds of the U.S. Naval Hospital when FDR went to visit a member of the cabinet and was taken from so far away as to make the president nearly unrecognizable. Nevertheless, *Life* published the image as part of a two-page photo spread of images of Roosevelt and his family.⁸⁸ After the photo appeared in print, Stephen Early wrote to the president's physician, "Here is a picture of the President in his wheelchair—a scene we have never permitted to be photographed."⁸⁹ Early demanded to know what steps would be taken at the hospital so that such pictures could not be made again. Later that fall when the president visited Chicago, McCormick's *Tribune* published a photograph of him with Cardinal George Mundelein that clearly showed FDR's leg braces. By contrast, the *New York Times* published a similar photo from that meeting that had been composed or later cropped to cut the two men's legs off at the shins, effectively obscuring the braces.⁹⁰



Figure 7.7: Carl Mydans, "Three uniformed men watch American President Franklin Roosevelt as he is wheeled to visit patients," 1937. (The LIFE Images Collection via Getty Images. Originally published as part of "The President's Album," *LIFE*, Aug. 16, 1937.)

However much Stephen Early and other advisers to the president worked behind the scenes to squelch such unusual images, the candid camera remained a matter of more routine concern. In May 1937 *Popular Photography* magazine debuted to capitalize on the ongoing candid camera craze. The cover of its first issue explained that the new publication would offer photography enthusiasts tips about “photo kinks, candid shots, home movies, common errors, tricks exposed,” and more.⁹¹ Just a few months later, in October, the magazine published a story titled “Why the Candid Camera Was Barred from the White House.” The chatty, sometimes tongue-in-cheek piece written by Rosa Reilly offered readers information about the Roosevelt administration’s mercurial relationship with candid camera culture. Speculating on why the Roosevelt White House had recently “barred the mini cam from Washington,” Reilly mentioned two potential reasons.⁹² First on the list of possible offenders was *Life* magazine photographer Thomas McAvoy, who had made unauthorized candid camera photographs of FDR at his desk in the Oval Office. But when Reilly queried McAvoy, the photographer told her that he had “never received any complaint about them” from anyone at the White House.⁹³ A second, more plausible cause was a group of “unconventional” photographs taken at a summer 1937 Democratic Party picnic at Jefferson Island, Virginia, including one that showed the president in the act of chewing his food. Reilly reported that major news outlets had requested permission to shoot the event, but they were denied. Yet photographs of the event circulated widely a few days later, raising the question of who had made the unauthorized images. Reilly wrote, “Well, the talk around New York and Washington is that several Congressmen or Senators took the unconventional photographs—which weren’t really so unconventional after all—and turned them over to Acme and the Associated Press. Those in the pictorial ‘know’ also are snickering in their sleeves because they say Acme and AP thoughtfully provided certain of the nation’s representatives with photographic equipment so that they could take adequate pictures.”⁹⁴ Whether the rumors and Reilly’s insinuations were correct or whether Democratic congressmen were just eager users of their own candid cameras, the Jefferson Island incident indicated how difficult it could be to control the candid camera anytime the president was out of the White House.⁹⁵

Finally, Reilly’s informants fingered as responsible an Associated Press photographer who had photographed the president on baseball’s opening day: “An Associated Press photographer caught Mr. Roosevelt as he was

Why the Candid Camera Was



This is the picture that caused many newspaper readers to inquire about the President's health.

BARRED from the WHITE HOUSE

by ROSA REILLY



Another candid shot taken during the season's opening baseball game which made the President appear ill.

POPULAR PHOTOGRAPHY'S special correspondent investigates the controversy as to why the miniature camera was barred from use in photographing the President.

THE candid camera is certainly new prisms in political circles. Months ago, Stephen Early, Press Secretary at the Executive Mansion, barred the minicams from Washington. And more recently, Mr. Early placed a month's ban—which was later reduced to a few days—on two press services because of the

Jefferson Island photographic fracas.

You all recall the melee which followed the Democratic love feast on Jefferson Island, where, in the early summer, Mr. Roosevelt and his followers gathered to relax under the trees and renew political friendships.

Here some unconventional photographs were taken and distributed—pictures which showed the President and his friends in shirt sleeves with handy glasses at their elbows.

POPULAR PHOTOGRAPHY has endeavored to sift the rumors which flew around after this occurrence from the truth. The facts in the case are these:

According to E. P. Dorman, General Manager of the Acme News Pictures, Inc., his service and the three other major news syndicates asked for permission to send photographers to Jefferson Island to cover the political picnic. This request was refused, with the result that no photographers attended.

The world was naturally astounded, therefore, to see a few days later four or five pictures of Mr. Roosevelt and his Senators and Congressmen enjoying themselves on Jefferson Island.

The pictures were released by Acme and the Associated Press although they had had no cameramen on the Island.

Where did the pictures come from? Who took the photographs?

Well, the talk around New York and Washington is that several Congressmen or Senators took the unconventional pho-

tographs—which weren't really so unconventional after all—and turned them over to Acme and the Associated Press.

Those in the pictorial "know" also are snickering in their sleeves because they say Acme and AP thoughtfully provided certain of the nation's representatives with photographic equipment so that they could take adequate pictures.

Whether that is true or not cannot be verified. However, some abdominal laughter has been had all around. The President enjoyed himself with a fair

Ammonia-sensitized film enabled newshawk McAvoy to get these candid shots of the President at his desk. Contrary to rumors the pictures in themselves had nothing to do with the candid camera ban.

Distribution of these pictures taken by Congressmen caused AP and Acme a bit of trouble.



Figure 7.8: "Why the Candid Camera Was Barred from the White House," *Popular Photography*, Oct. 1937, 13.

eating peanuts, rooting, and generally enjoying himself in his own lusty way.” But the resulting pictures showed something different: a president looking so tired and drawn that anxious newspaper readers from around the country inquired after the president’s health. According to those Reilly consulted, the problem was not so much the photographs per se but that they had been enlarged on the wrong kind of enlarger for miniature negatives and later “copied on a regular four by five plate which gave deep blacks and chalky whites to the Chief Executive’s face.” The Associated Press then sent the images out over the wires, “which produced a set of the pastiest faced photos ever seen” and prompted “another of those perennial scares raised about the President’s health.”⁹⁶ When Reilly queried Stephen Early on the issue, Early stated that although there was no “specific reason” for the ban, he confirmed that seeing the ballpark photos of the president played a part in his decision to ban the small cameras from the White House. In addition, he agreed that enlarging the miniature camera’s negatives produced “distortion” that other press camera negatives did not produce. Early also raised the issue of fairness, pointing out that miniature camera operators had an unfair advantage because they could “take dozens of shots where those with larger cameras were getting only a few.” Thus, Reilly concluded of Early’s position, “It seemed the fair thing was to bar the candid camera while the President was at his desk or in the White House.”⁹⁷

While the desire to manage the visibility of FDR’s disability no doubt played a role in the Roosevelt White House’s control of the candid camera, the *Popular Photography* article illustrated the broader anxieties about photography that circulated during the candid camera era. Access, energy, and intimacy—three visual values that FDR himself eagerly cultivated during the 1930s—could go wrong if it meant circulating photographs of President Roosevelt munching on a hot dog at a picnic or looking poorly in a badly exposed image. It was one kind of problem for a press photographer to make an unsolicited picture of President Roosevelt in public, “lustily” enjoying opening day. But it was a bigger problem to enlarge, print, and circulate that photo in ways that might distort the president’s visage and cause public alarm. Similarly, it might not by itself be a problem for Thomas McAvoy to use a small, so-called miniature camera to photograph the president, but it was “unfair” that those using the faster miniature cameras would get more opportunities for such a shot than operators of the bigger, slower press cameras.

Photography at One Hundred

A month after *Popular Photography* published its article on the White House and the candid camera, the *New York Times* reported that Winston Churchill had written a letter to the *Times* of London criticizing the use of the candid camera to photograph political figures. Churchill complained, “While guests are seated eating their dinner . . . photographers stalk about the room taking unexpected close-up shots of well-known people of both sexes which afterward are published by newspapers.” Photographers in the U.S. were the worst offenders, Churchill wrote, adding that he “recently saw President Roosevelt with his mouth half open in the act of eating and drinking.” Such practices were, according to Churchill, “discourteous” and constituted “effrontery.”⁹⁸

Photographer Arnold Genthe echoed Churchill’s sentiments two years later at an event celebrating the centenary of photography in 1939. The *New York Herald Tribune* reported that Genthe “took the occasion of the centennial to protest what he called a ‘definitely pathological trend’ among some photographers, particularly candid camera fans. He accused them of glorifying the ugly. There was need, he said, not so much of a photographic censor as of an Emily Post of photography.” One example Genthe gave of this pathological trend was—surprise—photographs of President Roosevelt “in the ‘not very beautiful’ act of eating a hot dog.”⁹⁹ The hot dog picture symbolized the limits of the candid camera’s decorousness. If Salomon-esque photographs of statesmen doing the engaged work of diplomacy constituted one use of the candid camera, FDR’s hot dog constituted quite another. The visual values of the candid camera—access, intimacy, and energy—oscillated perpetually between these extremes.

“Miniature” or 35 mm photography eventually dominated both amateur and professional photography and held that power for seventy-five years. The era of the candid camera was itself much shorter. Complaints about photographs of the president chewing or being pictured with leg braces were one thing, but in Europe the rise of fascism and Nazism made “privy” and “intimate” photographs like those pioneered by Salomon not only breaches of etiquette but patently dangerous as well. Salomon’s own tragic story illustrates this fact. He left Germany after Hitler came to power and resettled in his wife’s native Netherlands. Colleagues in the United States begged him to come to the U.S., where magazines like *Life* were hiring

German Jews who had pioneered the candid camera and picture magazine. According to his son Peter Hunter, Salomon put off leaving until it was too late. Salomon went into hiding with his family in 1943. A few months later they were discovered and sent to the Auschwitz concentration camp, where he, his wife, and their younger son were murdered in July 1944.¹⁰⁰

At the same centennial event where Genthe expressed his disdain for the candid camera, ninety-five-year-old William Henry Jackson, a well-known photographer of the late nineteenth-century American West, suggested that photography's evolution was nearly complete: "What more is there to be done? . . . We have color photography, sound synchronized with motion pictures, the transmission of pictures by television, and the taking of a picture in the hundred thousandth part of a second. I don't see what more there is to add, other than to perfect what we have."¹⁰¹ Coming as they did from a venerable nineteenth-century source, those words would largely hold true until the digital age, when new visual values would again emerge to transform the ways presidents engaged photography.