

Historian Delivers Nonpartisan Talk On Trump Election

Represented As A Decision- Maker

By **NOLAN STOUT**

Daily News-Record

BRIDGEWATER — Like him or not, President Donald Trump has a unique spot in American history.

Jon Meacham, a Pulitzer Prize-winning historian, delivered a refreshingly nonpartisan take on Trump's election to around 350 people as part of **Bridgewater College's** endowed lecture series on Tuesday night.

"He is the most unconventional president in American history," said Meacham, whose work includes biographies of Andrew Jackson and Thomas Jefferson.

Meacham, who is executive editor and executive vice president at Random House publishing, said Trump, who never held office before being elected president, stands alone with a lack of political experience.

The closest Meacham came during his talk to any political controversies was describing Trump's first few weeks in office.

Since succeeding Barack Obama in the White House, the new president has faced protests over several executive orders, including one last month in Harrisonburg attended by hundreds opposed to his actions on refugees and travel from seven predominantly Muslim nations.

But, Meacham said, Trump is delivering on campaign promises, for better or worse.

"He's going to do what he said he's going to do," Meacham said. "That's what he's done in the past couple of weeks. People who have been shocked to discover he was going to make these executive orders really just weren't listening to him."

Trump's rise is attached to three components, Meacham said: a distrust of government, economic anxiety and an increasingly partisan media.

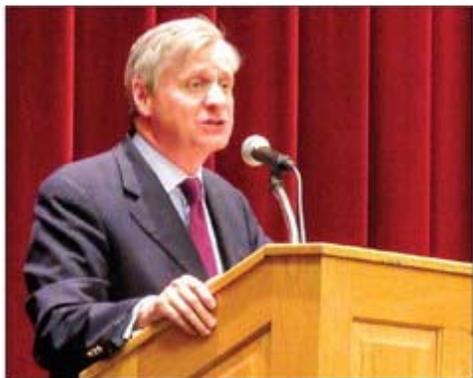
He said Trump has taken advantage of social media.

"He has mastered the means of communication of his era," he said.

Trump's role on the reality television program "Celebrity Apprentice" may have played the most important role in his political rise, Meacham said.

"It's almost unimaginable that he would be president today without being host of the 'Apprentice' for 14 years," Meacham said. "He came into millions and millions of households.

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Jon Meacham, a Pulitzer-Prize-winning presidential historian, gives a lecture at Bridgewater College Tuesday on understanding President Donald Trump's election.

Nolan Stout / DN-R

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He was represented week in and week out as a “clear-headed, clear-thinking decision-maker.”

Meacham also pointed to an increasingly partisan media, particularly cable news networks, for reinforcing established beliefs and contributing to the country's partisan divide. He said the 24-hour news cycle has profited by representing controversies as only two-sided, dumbing down dialogue. “That was just the gasoline on the garage floor,” he said. “And Trump is just the match.” Meacham also discussed how past presidents have faced crises and, rather than criticize the president, hoped Trump would succeed in similar ways.

“One hopes that he's able to learn along the way,” he said. “Because our greatest presidents are those who are able to learn, even at the very highest levels.”

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