

# A MAN'S WEEK TO RECKON

by ROBERT AJEMIAN

It had reached the point where Robert Kennedy could see the question forming on a person's lips, and he would break into a smile while it was being asked. Sometimes he even answered the question before it was asked. "I haven't made up my mind yet," he told one stammering reporter who was trying to ask what Kennedy was going to do in the future.

Then, in one week of near tragedy, Bob Kennedy had to reckon where he stood and what he wanted—and make his decision. He made it: he would not run for the U.S. Senate from New York, as some of his family and his close friends had been urging him to do.

He had pondered it as he paced among the massive oaks of his Virginia home. Then last week he found himself outside a Northampton hospital (*far left*). His only surviving brother, Ted Kennedy, senator from Massachusetts, had crashed in a plane and lay with a broken back. When the doctors finally said he would be all right, the Attorney General could breathe easily again.

"The relationship between Teddy and Bob has become far deeper the last six months," said one of the Kennedys. "Teddy has become to him now what Bob was to Jack. They're like crossed fingers. They talk every morning, and every night, wherever they are."

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Bob Kennedy comes out of his shell and makes some hard decisions about his career and his family

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# THEY TALK, TED CRASHES —BOB MAKES UP HIS MIND





**THE BROTHERS.** Under a tree hung with swings at Hickory Hill, Bob and Ted have a last talk about Bob's possible plans for entering the New York Senate race. Next day came the event

which firmed up Bob's mind. Flying Ted to Massachusetts, a chartered plane crashed into an apple orchard (*top*). The pilot and Ted's aide were killed. Ted was carried to an ambu-

lance with a broken back. The injuries, though not permanent, will take months to heal. With even more responsibilities now as head of his family, Bob decided not to run for Senate.

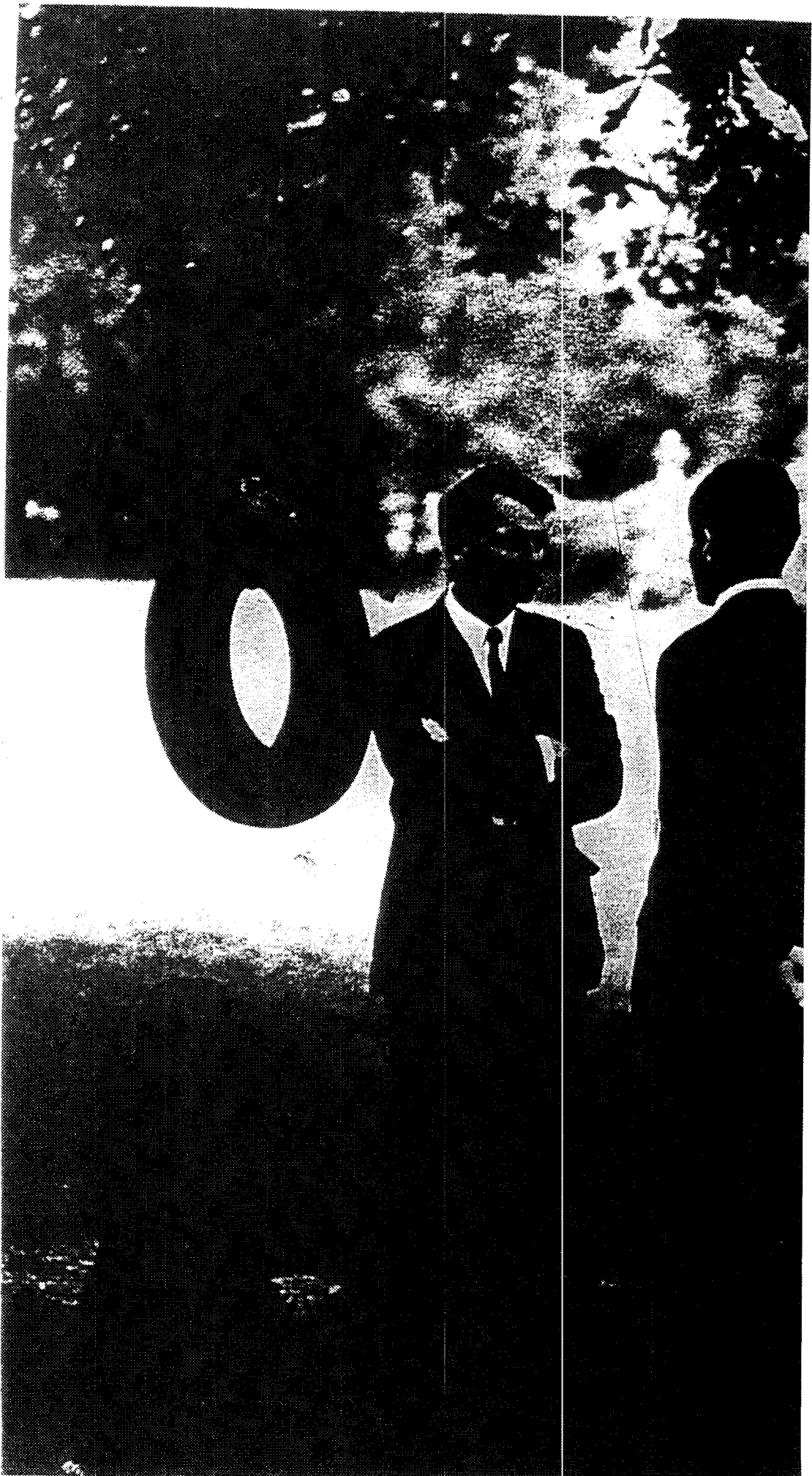
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# HE TAKES OVER AS HEAD OF THE CLAN

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as a political restorative to him. But he still feels he should leave Washington after January. "I want to get away for a while," he says. "If there is something important that has to be done, of course I'll do it. Look at Allen Dulles going to Mississippi last week. And General Taylor going to Vietnam. If he cared about personal comfort, he wouldn't be going, after all he's done for his country. So it's foolish to say that something might not come up. My main interest is to stay in government and continue the things we started. But right now my feeling is that I probably shouldn't be around here."

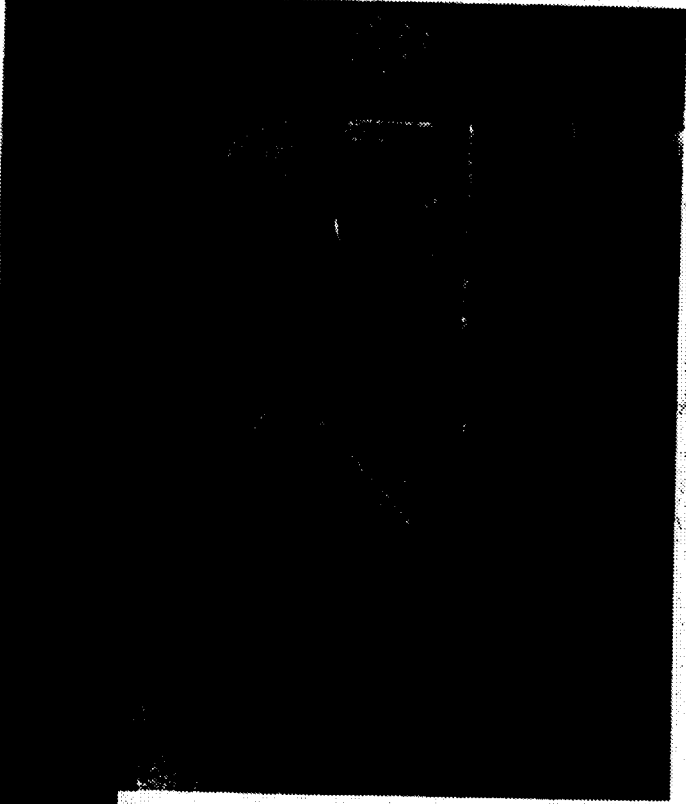
As he holds off on further deci-

sions, the pressure remains high on him to stay in public and political life. Much of it comes from the people who are now President Johnson's advisers. They value Bob Kennedy as much more than the brother of the late President. "He is one of the half-dozen men in the country today qualified for top political leadership," said one. "He cares, he really cares about right and wrong. He cares about people. In the last four years he has had fantastic experience, not just as Attorney General. And he has ambition and political drive."

A couple of months ago the thought that he might have no clear and immediate political future would have depressed and almost unnerved Bob Kennedy. "Now," says a friend, "he is much more patient. It was tough for him to decompress from those days when he was in the middle of the Berlin Wall crisis and the Cuban missile crisis, when we all counted on his strength. But he's done it more quickly than I expected. He's trimmed his sails. He presses a little less. But he's gotten back that shattering candor which can be so frightening—and so useful."

First signs that this candor would return were seen on the first important job he took after the assassination—his mission to the Orient to try to settle the fight between Malaysia and Indonesia. Kennedy ended his mission with a London report to Foreign Secretary Rab Butler. He was sharply critical of Britain's colonial minister, Duncan Sandys. As he spelled things out, Butler grew white with anger. Kennedy, he said, could not talk about one of his officers that way.

That was the way he saw it. Kennedy countered, and that was the way he was reporting it. Next day he made a point of speaking to Sandys himself. "Mr. Sandys," he said, smiling to take the edge off his sharpness, "you're about as popular in the East as I am in Alabama."



START OF A DAY. On his way to the office, Kennedy stands in hall at Hickory Hill with wife, Ethel, scanning the headlines while his daughter Kerry, 4, tugs for a goodby kiss.

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**DRAWING A CROWD.** On a speaking tour, Bob is besieged by Los Angeles high school students. "Don't turn your backs on your training," he told them later, "or on your parents."





**TENDERNESS FOR CAROLINE.** John Kennedy's daughter has eagerly joined Bob's family. She loves to push Christopher in his stroller (*left above*), stops to cling for a moment

to her uncle Bob. "She's my pal," he says fondly. But there is special feeling for Caroline who, at 6, understands the tragedy of her father's death as her brother John does not.

**ROUGHHOUSE FOR JOHN.** Bob swings his nephew on terrace. "Jack made John the mischievous, independent boy he is," says Jackie Kennedy. "Bobby is keeping that alive."

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He can even speak in a very direct and candid way about the assassination itself, which many foreigners speculate was some sort of conspiracy. "I don't care if it was done by one person or 10. But I don't believe in all these complex theories," he says.

A major preoccupation of Bob Kennedy's in the past six months has been his family—and now it includes his brother's children, Caroline, who is 6, and John, who is 3. Jackie Kennedy brings them out almost every day to their uncle's home, Hickory Hill, five miles outside Washington. Bob and Ethel spend as much time with them as with their own brood of eight. "They think of it as their own home," says Jackie Kennedy. "Anything that comes up involving a father, like father's day at school, I always mention Bobby's name. Caroline shows him her report cards. She makes drawings at school marked 'To Uncle Bobby.'

"We used to think that if anything happened to us, we'd want to leave the children with Ethel and Bobby. But we always felt they had their own big responsibilities. Now I want them to be part of that family. Bobby wants to look after his brother's children. There's John, with his brother's name. He's going to make sure John turns out as he should."

Often Bob has sat around with close friends, recalling anecdotes of Jack Kennedy, welcoming the chance to reminisce. After a speech in Pittsburgh recently, as local reporters were questioning him about his future, one of them leaned forward and asked him abruptly, "What do you miss most about your brother?" Kennedy looked startled and stared at the reporter as he sought the exact answer. His face softened and he said, "Just that he's not here."



**GUEST'S GREETING.** John Kennedy, Jr., who plays at Hickory Hill often, hands Brumas, a Newfoundland, rubber bone to he says hello. In distance, sister and cousin ride ponies.

**BUSY BREAKFAST.** Ethel finishes her meal as Michael, 6, holds Christopher, one, in lap and 7-year-old Courtney tempts baby by testing his food. Joseph, 11, looks out window.

**GAME IN THE POOL.** Caroline Kennedy, legs tangled in a cousin's, tumbles off a submerged Pierre Salinger. They lose a watery jousting match with Bob and two of his daughters.

