



The Kennedy-Johnson Feud

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When Sen. Robert F. Kennedy was a small boy, his father drilled into him and his brothers the idea that one of them was to become President of the U. S. Old Joe Kennedy was a persistent papa. He was schooled in the tradition that money could get you a long way in life, especially when coupled with Irish charm; and he was determined, as the son of Irish immigrants, that one of his boys should break the ban on a Catholic President.

His eldest son, Joseph P. Kennedy Jr., was killed during the war, flying off the coast of Portugal. Joe saw his second son, John F. Kennedy, attain the dream, only to see him shot down tragically in Dallas.

The night of the assassination, the Kennedy clan met in the White House until a very late hour planning how to get the White House back in the hands of a Kennedy.

It was then that a book was discussed telling the facts of the assassination. The eventual book, "The Death of a President," by William Manchester, distorted many of the facts, especially the report that Lyndon Johnson had inveigled John F. Kennedy into going to Texas.

The facts were just the opposite. But the bitterness shown by Bobby and the refusal of Jackie ever to set foot in the White House while the Johnsons occupy it have given wide circulation to the myth, and many Europeans still believe that the Vice President helped plot President Kennedy's death.

Obviously this led to the deepening of the bitterness between Bobby Kennedy and the man he would like to replace.

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Actually, the Bobby-LBJ feud had begun long before the assassination. Probably it began on that fateful day in Los Angeles when the Democratic convention nominated JFK for President and when Kennedy, a practical politician, realized that in order to win he needed a strong running mate. When he tapped Lyndon Johnson, it was against the advice of his brother.

As Vice President, with little to do, Lyndon Johnson, a restless and dynamic former Senate Majority Leader, was most unhappy. And what

contributed to his unhappiness was a series of newspaper articles which everyone in Washington suspected came from Bobby Kennedy telling how Lyndon was a fifth wheel.

The public knew little about this bitterness but those inside the Administration did. And efforts were made to do something about it.

Averell Harriman, a good friend of Bobby Kennedy, talked to him. And in the Justice Dept. Ramsey Clark, who had grown up in a Texas family which Lyndon Johnson frequently visited, urged his boss, Attorney General Kennedy, to invite the Vice President over to the Justice Dept. for an occasional staff luncheon. The Attorney General did not take the hint.

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All this occurred before the assassination. After the tragedy of Dallas, Bobby Kennedy disappeared for several days. He became distraught, red-eyed and unshaven. No man mourned the death of his brother more than the man who was determined eventually to succeed him.

President Johnson, trying to get Bobby's mind off the death of his brother, sent him to Indonesia to negotiate a ceasefire with Malaysia, where he did a good job. Johnson also kept Bobby on as Attorney General, despite reports—probably erroneous—that Bobby had dredged up the Bobby Baker case to embarrass Johnson and was tapping the wires of Baker's friend, Fred Black, in the Sheraton-Carlton Hotel, also to embarrass the President.

When it became apparent that Bobby wanted to run as Vice President in 1964, however, LBJ drew the line. He did not want the man who hated him most serving as his Vice President. So, on the recommendation of Clark Clifford, he called Bobby in and told him that he was going to bar as Vice President anyone who was serving in the Cabinet.

Bobby was furious. He brooded for a few weeks, resigned from the Cabinet, then jumped into the New York Senate race to win a place which would keep him in the public eye. He has been in the public eye ever since, determined eventually to achieve his father's ambition and put a Kennedy back in the White House.