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That Kennedy Magic Still A Potent Talisman For Bobby

By ARTHUR EDSON

WASHINGTON (AP) — When Bobby Kennedy walks down a city street, even on the darkest night, passersby recognize him and maybe ask for his autograph.

In the sedate Senate when he arises to speak, young ladies in the galleries stifle their impulse to scream and old ladies in the back rows stand up and peer.

When he is in a crowd his bodyguard, Bill Barry, formerly of the FBI, pushes ahead to absorb the blows of the frenzied.

And even on his South American trip, the Kennedy excitement held. He was egged and spat at by leftist students in Chile. But he was also showered with flower petals. In Buenos Aires, the acclaim was so great that an observer remarked: "They don't want him for president; they want him for dictator."

A strange thing happened to Bobby Kennedy on the way to the Senate. Along the line, some of the idolatry — there really is no other word for it — given the late President John F. Kennedy was passed on to his younger brother.

It now is obvious to friend and foe — and Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, D-N.Y., has a large and loud supply of each — that he is one of the nation's hottest political items.

And some of that goes too for younger brother Ted—Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass.

They have looks, brains, sex appeal, drive, tenacity, charm — and money and a willingness to use it.

Is Bobby shooting for the presidency. Of course he is.

Every politician dreams of sitting behind that big White House desk, but scores of liabilities deter them, including a lack of ready cash to push them-

selves vigorously when the big chance comes.

Barring ailments or accidents, Lyndon B. Johnson seems certain to be in the White House until January 1973.

Last month's elections proved that Robert Kennedy still has problems. The Democratic party is in trouble in his adopted state. It lost the New York City mayoralty race even though it had a 3-1 edge in registrations, and even though the President and the vice president plugged for its candidate, Abraham D. Beame.

Although Kennedy campaigned vigorously for Beame, the suspicion is that the verdict didn't break, or even badly dent, his heart.

He is the only major Democratic winner in the state, and is in an excellent position to determine how the party can grow, and who should do the growing — only a little over a year after he moved in.

As U.S. attorney general, Kennedy supervised 30,000 employes who struggled with everything from civil rights to organized crime. But this was only the beginning; as the President's brother, his advice was sought on problems far removed from the Justice Department.

As senator, Kennedy has 29 staff members here, six in New York City and two in Syracuse. This is a large office by senatorial standards, but its crises usually aren't in the same league with, say, the Bay of Pigs.

Yet the longer Kennedy has the Senate job the better he likes it.

Especially does Kennedy like the independence the job offers.

He can take the Senate floor at almost any moment for almost any purpose and talk at length on almost any subject, at

liberty to be as mighty a statesman or as big a bore as he chooses.

Before an unentranced Senate — at one point the only other member present was Maurine B. Neuberger, D-Ore., who was presiding — he argued that a means must be found to halt the spread of nuclear weapons.

Critics have noted that such cosmic subjects, plus his frequent trips abroad, keep his name in print and won't hurt him any in future presidential sweepstakes.

Jack Kennedy appeared relaxed, cool, amused in situations that others would find embarrassing. Often, Robert Kennedy seems awkward, ill at ease.

But anyone who travels with him is surprised to learn that, if he hasn't mastered urbanity, he has developed a style of his own.

While supporting Abe Beame, Kennedy was able to joke about the charge raised during his senatorial campaign that he was a carpetbagger.

"I've been traveling upstate where they have trouble with my accent," he said. "It's nice to be back in the Bronx where we speak the same language."

Politicians devote much of their time trying to satisfy their craving for publicity, but few can match Kennedy's skill and few can equal his squadron of helpers.

There's his family: the vivacious Ethel, falling into a creek near Port Angeles, Wash., or riding a motor scoter in Rome; their nine children, cracking arms or collarbones or winning in horse shows; his brother Ted, cooking senatorial stews of his own; his brother-in-law, Sargent

Shriver, with one of the keenest senses of publicity in Washington, and able to gratify it doubly as director of both the Peace and Job Corps; those formidably active sisters and in-laws, including Jacqueline Kennedy, snaring headlines automatically; his mother, Rose, at 75 bustling like a teen-ager, and even his father, Joseph P., whose money made all this possible, making news through worries over his health after a stroke.

New York is so populous and close to the capital that a run of the mine senator would get far more action than a first-rater from the boondocks. So it's difficult to determine how much of Kennedy's daily office turmoil is due to his name and how much to where he comes from.

But the 12 telephones to the senator's office are frequently tied up, with a waiting list. His mail will run from 600 to 700 letters a day, jumping to 1,700 when events particularly alarm or excite his constituents. Each day he gets from 35 to 50 invitations, some wanting major speeches, some asking him to Sonny's bar mitzvah.

At 40, Bobby Kennedy has wealth, an attractive family, a high position. Yet not long ago, when he undoubtedly would be much happier home with his family, here he was on a hurry-up trip in the family plane, the Caroline, to talk to some nurses in Albany.

This reporter, tagging along and watching the ceaseless activity, asked how long Kennedy would feel compelled to work this hard.

"I suppose as long as I stay in

politics and government," he said.

He then borrowed a notebook and pencil—the Kennedys never seem to own the simple necessities of life — and wrote down a quote from the Greek dramatist Aeschylus, that ended like this:

"But when the height is won — then there is ease."

Bobby Kennedy didn't say what height he had in mind. Maybe he didn't think it was necessary.