

Kilduff's Innuendo

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FACTS are for the birds

Innuendo is what's happening today.

It — innuendo — may not be fair, or strictly honorable, or shining in truth. But it's marketable.

Witness the case of Malcolm M. Kilduff, a White House press functionary with President Kennedy on his fatal journey to Dallas. A self-confessed spectator to history, he has chosen to deal in innuendo instead of fact regarding what transpired between Mrs. John F. Kennedy and President and Mrs. Johnson during the flight that carried the new Chief Executive and the body of his predecessor to Washington on the tragic evening of Nov. 22, 1963.

The truth about what happened — if anything, in fact, did happen — on that flight is long overdue. Mr. Kilduff had a splendid chance to clear the air last week in a taped television-radio interview with the Westinghouse Broadcasting Co. on the third anniversary of President Kennedy's assassination.

Instead, Mr. Kilduff chose further flight into innuendo when he said:

"I think that there are things that happened, especially on the plane coming back, that could be embarrassing to both the Kennedys and the Johnsons."

By Inez Robb

At that point the former aide piously refused to say what happened. He did nothing to help matters or lessen innuendo when he said of President Johnson, "There was no grossness on his part as has been implied by others in the past."

The pro-Kennedy factions, who can never forgive Lyndon Baines Johnson for becoming President, should remember that Mr. Johnson is President today precisely because he was the choice of the late President Kennedy as his running mate in 1960. The Democratic candidate in Los Angeles in 1960 may not have cleared his choice with Bobby, but John F. Kennedy — and John F. Kennedy alone — chose Senator Johnston for the Vice Presidency.

Mr. Kennedy, a skilled politician, picked Mr. Johnson for the most practical or cynical (depending upon one's views of politics) of reasons. He was convinced that he needed the Texas senator as a running mate to carry as much of the South as possible, a section in which the then-Senator Kennedy judged that his religion would be a damaging issue, as it had been for Al Smith.

The 1960 Democratic candidate's selection of his running mate has been told and retold, but never better than by Theodore H. White in "The Making of The President, 1964." Mr. Kennedy alone picked the 36th President of the United States, Lyndon Johnson.

Mr. White deals in facts. This nation would be less troubled today if others did.