

He uses—and

A couple of weeks ago Robert Kennedy had occasion to go to Connecticut in support of Governor John Dempsey's successful campaign for re-election. It was a completely routine stumping trip except for one thing: the senator from New York chose to make the tour at night, and over virtually the same route, that John F. Kennedy had followed on the night of Nov. 6, 1960, two days before he was elected President.

What was at work here was more than a nice sense of history. It was an example of sustaining what has come to be called the "Kennedy Legend"—the widespread, emotion-charged legacy of love, admiration and longings connected with John Fitzgerald Kennedy, his brief but graceful reign as President and his death. It is an emotion sincerely and deeply felt by Bob Kennedy himself.

In their profound shock over the President's murder, the Kennedys began instantly to memorialize him. It was a family decision that lit the eternal flame at the grave in Arlington; it was Jackie Kennedy who assented to Theodore White's journey to Hyannisport for the poignant "Camelot" interview (*LIFE*, Dec. 6, 1963). The family formulated plans for the Kennedy Library in Cambridge and began raising money for it—Jackie Kennedy organized a touring exhibition of Kennedy mementos;

Bobby and other family members personally, sometimes brusquely, solicited contributions from corporations and individuals.

In the country at large, meanwhile, and in much of the world, the public quickly formed its own Kennedy Legend. There was almost a stampede to name or rename structures and geographic features, to dedicate articles, books and TV documentaries to the fallen President's memory.

Robert Kennedy today is both keeper of the Legend and its chief legatee. And since he is pretender to the White House, there is constant debate—especially among politicians—over which role he is playing *vis à vis* the Legend at any given moment. Is he perpetuating it? Adding to it? Is he drawing on it for his own political gain, or his own emotional comfort?

Other politicians are both dazzled and dismayed by the Legend and by the strength it has imparted to Bob Kennedy. Cynics are quick to scoff at his reflection of familiar J.F.K. mannerisms, at his recently acquired taste for quotations (Frost, Plato, Pericles, Shaw and Tennyson), at the PT-109 tie clips which he still passes out on occasion, at his regular invocation of his brother's name in speeches. The senator's haste to make the first ascent of Canada's newly christened Mt. Kennedy (*LIFE*, April 2, April 9, 1965) struck many as proof



Kennedy gives PT-109 pins to three airline stewardesses while on a nationwide swing in support of Democratic candidates last month. Pins originated as J.F.K. campaign symbols.

Kennedy, who had never climbed a mountain before and has no desire to repeat, made first ascent of Mt. Kennedy (*right*) in March 1965, leaving J.F.K. memorabilia at the summit.

'deeply feels—the 'Legend'

of Legend-milking—if not insanity—of a high order. But it is worth noting that people close to Bob Kennedy disagree heatedly. "Look," said one, "if you're a Kennedy male, it's just one of those things you do—Ted would have gone along if he could. If all Bob wanted to do was become President, there are ways of getting publicity without risking his neck on some damn mountain where he had no business being."

Bob Kennedy could hardly ignore the Legend even if he wanted to. Assuredly, he does not. He surrounds himself with reminders of his brother. His office in Washington, like his Virginia home and his apartment in New York, is a virtual museum of J.F.K. memorabilia—snapshots, doodles, personal notes, furniture, etc.—which the public does not see. He is deeply, at times almost ferociously, dedicated to the perpetuation of his brother's memory.

Yet the Kennedys have never been so immersed in the Legend as to lose their sense of proprietorship over it. They—notably Bobby—have read and corrected, if not actually censored, most of the principal books written by New Frontiersmen. They hired a writer, William Manchester, to do an authorized account of the assassination and its aftermath, which is scheduled for publication next spring.

Jacqueline Kennedy herself chose Manchester in 1964, and once this was done the Kennedys made it very clear that the family wished all other similar projects dropped. When writer Jim Bishop, who was attempting such a book, protested, the family put pressure on his pub-

lisher, and Jackie finally wrote to him personally that "none of the people connected with November 22 will speak to anyone but Mr. Manchester. That is my wish, and it is theirs also."

Many of Manchester's sources moreover had been assured that his book would not be released for five years. Agreeing to be interviewed by him in some instances meant turning down publishers' offers to write their own accounts of Nov. 22. This effectively foreclosed any authoritative account of the assassination other than Manchester's. Yet within two years after the doors were closed in the faces of Bishop and the other writers, Bob Kennedy jumped the publication date of the book from late 1968 to early 1967.

Then there was a modest book by Paul Fay Jr., Under Secretary of the Navy during the J.F.K. administration and cherished friend of Jack Kennedy. "Red" Fay's volume of Kennedy reminiscences was duly reviewed by Bobby, Jackie and others before publication. Fay cut his manuscript by about half. Yet even so, some of his anecdotes that remained offended the clan. Loyal old Red Fay is no longer considered a Kennedy confidant.

Added to all these instances of Kennedy goal-tending against any adverse influences on the Legend is Bob's refusal to surrender—even to the Warren Commission—the official autopsy pictures taken at Bethesda. (Two weeks ago he deposited them, under seal, in the National Archives.) The pictures, of course, were gruesome and had been viewed by Chief Justice Warren. Kennedy obviously feared tasteless publication, but his position seemed to place him again athwart freedom of information.

Whatever may be said about Bob Kennedy's handling of the Legend, as a political figure he obviously owes a great deal to it. The last two years, however, have seen him emerge gradually from its reflected glow into a clear and



powerful identity of his own. The process continues. Until it is complete it will be difficult to judge fairly whether or not he can fill the role history and the Legend appear to be forcing upon him. ◀

LIFE 11/18/66 Hugh Sidney

Bob and Jacqueline Kennedy, closely allied in trusteeship of the Legend, inspect a model of a J.F.K. exhibit which toured the U.S. in 1964 to raise money for the Kennedy Library.

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he left for an overnight visit to Mexico City.

The conflicts were aggravated by an almost complete incompatibility of temperament and philosophy. Lyndon Johnson, who demands fanatical personal neatness and loyalty to himself and all his causes, cannot figure out the studiously rumpled Bobby and why he evokes the adoration of the mobs with his dissents from the Great Society. Kennedy stares down from Capitol Hill in bewilderment at the President of the United States straining the nation's credulity with needless secrecy and a welter of misleading statements.

"You're lucky," Bob Kennedy once told a friend, "you've been poor." He cannot escape the self-consciousness of his massive inherited wealth. Lyndon Johnson glories in the fact that he has made himself rich.

Out campaigning, the President, whose New Deal political thinking was shaped by the Depression, explains his philosophy to the folks: "Count your blessings. No people ever had so much to be grateful for as we do." Kennedy, who has had everything all his life, calls for his Democrats to be "the party of dissatisfaction. I say this country can do better; it must do more," he shouts.

Bob Kennedy lives on the edge of excitement and danger, shooting rapids, climbing mountains—all those things which stir up young Americans. Johnson beats a steady middle-aged path between Washington and his ranch in Texas—working.

But as the post-assassination passion drained away, reason and in acceptance of their differences began to restore sensible relations between the two men. In 1964, when Kennedy left the government, he asked three things of Johnson: to make Nicholas Katzenbach acting Attorney General;



to pardon the aging Frank Boycin, a congressman convicted of bribery; to name the old family friend Francis X. Morrissey a federal judge. Johnson delivered on all three counts (though the Senate rebelled against Morrissey). And in that same time the President showed deep sympathy for the shattered family. When Bob volunteered to become ambassador to Vietnam, Lyndon Johnson turned him down. "Can you imagine," he mused one night to a guest, "what would happen to that family if they lost one more mem-