

Kennedy Picked Johnson for No. 2 Spot To 'Tuck Him Away,' Ex-Aide Writes

From Our Wire Services

NEW YORK, Aug. 2.—Former Presidential aide Kenneth O'Donnell said in an article published Sunday that John F. Kennedy selected Lyndon B. Johnson as his running mate in 1960 to deprive Mr. Johnson of the Senate leadership and get him "safely tucked away" as Vice President.

In excerpts from a forth-

coming book, O'Donnell also writes that Mr. Kennedy had plans for withdrawing all U. S. forces from Vietnam in 1965 after his election to a second term, a plan that was frustrated by his assassination in 1963.

O'Donnell, in a third major point made in the article, says Mr. Johnson tried to avoid picking Hubert Humphrey as

his running mate in 1964 and preferred Sen. Mike Mansfield of Montana for the same reason that Mr. Kennedy wanted Mr. Johnson—to remove him from the Senate leadership.

As one of Mr. Kennedy's closest advisers, O'Donnell served as White House chief of staff and sat in on many of the most confidential Presidential meetings. He served Mr. Johnson under strained circumstances in the same capacity after the Kennedy assassination but quit in January 1965 and is now seeking the Democratic nomination for governor of Massachusetts.

In a passage heavy with irony, O'Donnell relates Mr. Kennedy's assessment of his longevity in explaining at the 1960 Democratic convention his offer to Mr. Johnson of the second spot on the ticket.

"I never forgot what he said next," O'Donnell writes.

"I'm 43 years old, and I'm the healthiest candidate for President in the United States. You've traveled with me enough to know that. I'm not going to die in office. So the

Vice Presidency doesn't mean anything.

"I'm thinking of something else, the leadership of the Senate. If we win, it will be by a small margin and I won't be able to live with Lyndon Johnson as the leader of a small Senate majority. Did it occur to you that if Lyndon becomes the Vice President, I'll have Mike Mansfield as the Senate leader, somebody I can trust and depend on?"

O'Donnell said Mr. Kennedy warned that if there were a split with Mr. Johnson after the convention, "I'll be the laughingstock of the country. Nixon will say I haven't any power in my own party."

On Vietnam, O'Donnell says that Mr. Kennedy called Mansfield into his office in the spring of 1963 to discuss Mansfield's arguments for a U. S. pullout at a time when there were about 16,000 Americans in the war zone.

"The President told Mansfield that he had been having serious second thoughts about Mansfield's argument and that he now agreed with the senator's thinking on the need for a complete military withdrawal

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from Vietnam," O'Donnell writes.

"But I can't do it until 1965 —after I'm re-elected."

As for the Johnson move to have Mansfield become Vice President, O'Donnell writes that he told Mr. Johnson he believed Mansfield would not accept.

Mr. Johnson, according to O'Donnell, disagreed, telling O'Donnell:

"Let me tell you something —that's what they said about little old Lyndon in 1960. When they lead you up on the mountain and show you those green fields down below and that beautiful White House standing there—you know what you do? You take it. They all take it."

Mansfield, it turned out, rejected Mr. Johnson's offer.

Some of the enmity between



Kenneth O'Donnell

... memories of JFK

Mr. Johnson and Robert Kennedy stemmed from the appointment of a woman Federal judge in Texas, O'Donnell reports.

The judge, Sarah T. Hughes, was the court officer who swore in Mr. Johnson as President after President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas.

O'Donnell reports that Mr. Johnson, as Vice President, came to Mr. Kennedy with "a long recital of woe" over the relative insignificance of his office, explaining that he had asked Robert Kennedy, then attorney general, to appoint Mr. Hughes to the Texas judgeship.

Robert Kennedy, according to O'Donnell, told Mr. Johnson that Mrs. Hughes at 65 was "too old." Mr. Johnson, O'Donnell reports, then went abroad to Berlin and learned on his return that Mrs. Hughes had been given the judgeship after all.

It turned out, O'Donnell writes, that Robert Kennedy

had encountered House Speaker Sam Rayburn of Texas and asked him why two key Justice Department bills had been stalled in committee.

"Rayburn ventured the opinion that the bills might never get out if his friend Sarah Hughes did not get a judgeship in Texas," O'Donnell writes. Kennedy then offered the age reasoning again, O'Donnell says, and Rayburn told the 35-year-old attorney general, "son, everybody looks old to you. Do you want those bills passed, or don't you?"

O'Donnell said Mrs. Hughes was appointed the next day.

Mr. Johnson, according to O'Donnell, complained to John Kennedy that the move had embarrassed him "but the President was unable to keep from laughing, and the Vice President, seeing the humor of the situation, laughed too."