

Photos in Henry Gallery

Kennedy Memories Linger, Some Still At 1960's Prices

By RITA REIF

FOR COUNTLESS PEOPLE around the world, John F. Kennedy's assassination and the days that followed are endlessly retriggered memories. In the Henry Gallery in London, Johnson showed Air Force One, the funeral cortege with a rifeless black hearse. Yet 30 years later, despite the high drama of the Kennedy Presidency, memorabilia from the era — manuscripts, photographs, campaign buttons and the like — are not in great demand at auctions and in galleries. Further, prices for Kennedy material, which skyrocketed in the years after his death, are not particularly impressive, with the exception of those for some rare autographs.

At the Kennedy Library in Boston, which has



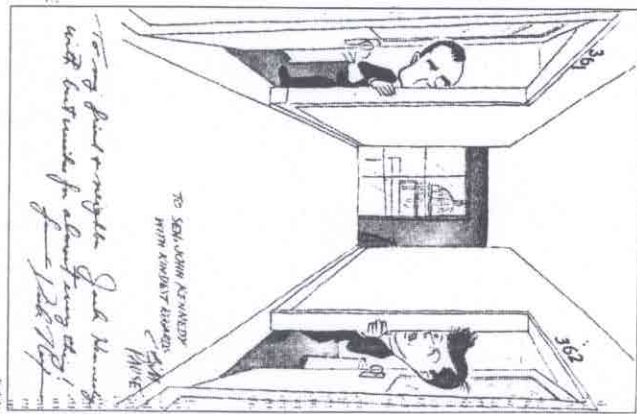
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of our homes." The image was of an immensely popular, charismatic figure who to many represented hope for change after the backwater Presidency of Eisenhower. But, with the tarnishing of Kennedy's personal and political reputation over the years, his appeal has eroded along with the market for his autographs. Even Andy Warhol's silk screen, a political cartoon from 1960, and then declined in price, although they have been due more to the market for Warhol than interest in Kennedy.

"In real terms," Mr. Forbes adds, "prices are probably lower now than they were 30 years ago. Kennedy's place in history is not secure. People don't know whether he'll end up among the pantheon of political heroes or whether he was simply a TV-age hand."

N ANY CASE, IT IS GENERALLY agreed that Kennedy autographs from his Senate days onward are problematic. Kennedy used Adlon and secretarial signatures almost exclusively in Washington. The handwritten notes on his books, the handwritten letters, and the amount of Kennedy signed material available — yet, when it does appear, collectors are extremely interested.

In Manhattan, the anniversary is being marked by, among other activities, an exhibition of 30 items relating to the assassination at the Forbes magazine gallery on lower Fifth Avenue. In a related show at the gallery, "Presidents on Presidents: Chief Citizens," a 1969 political cartoon depicts Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon warily eyeing each other from their Senate offices. Malcolm S. Forbes Jr., editor in chief of Forbes magazine and a manuscript collector, says the initial popularity of Kennedy autographs was "unprecedented in the history of Kennedy sales from 1940 through \$80,000.



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Examples of the President's signature are especially scarce. Those who own any seem to be reluctant to part with them.

last year, a dozen letters — handwritten and typed — to a crew member of the PT-109, the torpedo boat Kennedy had skippered, fetched \$25,000.

In Chicago, a manuscript dealer, Christine, in New York, the auctioneer, Kennedy items have been divided into three categories: family, friends or associates. More modest offerings, often bringing less than auction houses expect. For example, a two-page draft of a 1957 speech Kennedy made to the Senate about Henry Kissinger's role in the Vietnam War, fetched \$2,500, despite a pre-sale estimate of \$2,500 to \$3,500.

Prices for Kennedy material represent small change compared to the sums realized for Lincoln and Washington manuscripts — even in the same era.

"Lincoln is far beyond anyone else," says

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