



CONVERSATIONS
WITH KENNEDY
PART 5

Bantering Among

By Benjamin C. Bradlee

June 14, 1963—The President was in particularly gay and effusive mood last night, while other Kennedys—Bobby, Pat Lawford, Ethel and Jean Kennedy Smith—were critical in one way or another of last week's stories, especially mine—about Teddy's nomination (for the U.S. Senate seat from Massachusetts). They all felt any discussion of a Kennedy dynasty was unfair.

The occasion was a party given for the President by Jean and Steve Smith. Jean was particularly horrified when I told her Newsweek was planning a Kennedy dynasty cover story—with pictures of JFK, Bobby and

Teddy on the cover—if Teddy won the primary and election.

She was truly appalled and asked if I'd still do the story if the President refused to cooperate. I was so sure he would cooperate that I agreed to her suggestion that we ask him for the family line on whether the Kennedy dynasty was a legitimate area of inquiry for a responsible national newsmagazine. Jean bet me he would have some qualifications and she was right, but not the way she had thought. "After he's elected," Kennedy said. "The idea's not only legitimate, but fascinating."

About 10:30 p.m., the President stood up to make a toast, excusing himself for beginning in Jean's ab-

Brothers and a Financial Feud

sence (she returned a few minutes later, announcing to all concerned—"Sorry, kid, I had to go peeps"), but he said he had to watch the rebroadcast of his news conference at 11. He wanted to make a toast to the Attorney General, he said, and went on to describe how he had been talking that afternoon with Jim Patton, president of Republic Steel. "I was telling Patton what an SOB he was," the President said with a smile, referring obliquely to his now famous remark that all businessmen were SOBs.

He waited with that truly professional sense of timing instinctive to the best comedians, and went on "... and he was proving it. Patton asked me 'Why is it that all the telephone

calls of all the steel executives in all the country are being tapped?' And I told him that I thought he was being wholly unfair to the Attorney General and that I was sure that it wasn't true. And he asked me 'Why is it that all the income tax returns of all the steel executives in all the country are being scrutinized?' And I told him that, too, was wholly unfair, that the Attorney General wouldn't do any such thing. And then I called the Attorney General and asked him why he was tapping the telephones of all the steel executives and examining the tax returns of all steel executives... and the Attorney General told me that was wholly untrue and unfair." And

then another Stanislavsky pause. "And of course Patton was right."

At this point Bobby interrupted from the floor to explain in mock seriousness: "They were mean to my brother. They can't do that to my brother."

There was a great deal of conversation about Teddy. The President wanted to hear all the stories from Springfield—preferably in dialect.

At one point, Bobby asked me to rise to drink a toast to Teddy, on the grounds that I had been the only one present who was in Massachusetts when he won the nomination. The Kennedys—not JFK or Jackie—have a habit of urging people to get on

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PEOPLE/SCENE

CONVERSATIONS, From C1

their feet and make inappropriate speeches, only to drown them out with catcalls when they do. It seemed to me now that they were somehow trying to get me to commit myself to his candidacy and more generally to his virtue, and I didn't want to play that game.

The President made a big point of saying that Teddy had to win three separate victories—the convention, the primary and the election—and that in working for these three victories, he would qualify himself as a senator. He seemed convinced that any 30-year-old who could survive three such difficult fights was qualified by the very fact of his victories. Kennedy criticized the Time story of Teddy's nomination with its heavy doses of Knocko McCormack [Edward J. McCormack Sr., brother of Speaker of the House John McCormack], and made the point that Knocko's significance lay in the fact that he had no significance. He particularly objected to a phrase in the Time piece that had Teddy smiling "sardonically."

"Bobby and I smile sardonically," he said with a smile. "Teddy will learn how to smile sardonically in two or three years, but he doesn't know how yet."

Nov. 15, 1962—We served as insulation tonight for a family squabble over finances at the White House.

Jackie had just learned (remarkably enough) that her husband was giving his salary to charity and had told him early that day that she sure could use the money herself. A series of questions had evidently ensued, which led to a request for information from the President about the state of the family finances.

He had the information in a letter, which he had with him and which had him boiling . . . not so much mad, as amazed and indignant. The item that had him really bugged was "Department Stores—\$40,000." No one had an explanation, much less Jackie. No furnishings for the White House, and as Jackie pointed out, "no sable coat, or anything."

Kennedy announced that he had called in Carmine Bellino, an accounting expert for various Senate committees on deciphering the financial records of Mafiosi and a long-time Kennedy friend, to straighten out the family finances. He said Bobby had recently called in Bellino to straighten out Ethel's finances. They were so tangled, the President said, that Bellino had to move into the Hickory Hill house to find out who was stealing what.

Kennedy said he could understand why running for the presidency was expensive. He had spent and spent, he said—all of it capital. But "once you're in here, this is a place where

a fellow should at least break even, with all the services provided."

During dinner, Adlai Stevenson telephoned the President to report on a session he'd just had with Vasily Kuznetsov, the Soviet deputy foreign minister. I couldn't smoke out any details of that session, but after hanging up, the President called McGeorge Bundy and set up a meeting of ExCom—the ad hoc group that had handled the Cuban missile crisis—to discuss the memorandum he'd just asked Stevenson to prepare, before sending Assistant Secretary of State George Ball up to New York.

The President referred to Stevenson in a manner that did nothing to dispel the rumors that he was less than 100 per cent behind his U.N. ambassador. Jackie had her portable Victrola going full tilt throughout the Kennedy-Stevenson telephone conversation.

Howard K. Smith, the TV commentator, had just surfaced Alger Hiss for a special ABC broadcast on "The Political Obituary of Richard M. Nixon" (!). Kennedy called it "a typical demonstration of phony liberals," and expressed concern that it might help Nixon, even though he feels that Nixon is "beyond saving," politically. He said he thinks Nixon is "sick."

FRIDAY: *Jumping on Lincoln's Bed*

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