

That tragic June night when Bobby was killed

By Jack V. Fox

LOS ANGELES (UPI) — It was nearing midnight in the suite on the fifth floor of the Ambassador Hotel and Bobby Kennedy was slumped down in a chair with his feet propped up on a bed watching television and sipping from a glass of ginger ale.

The returns showed he had beaten Sen. Eugene J. McCarthy in the California Democratic presidential primary and Pierre Salinger was urging him to go down to the Embassy Ballroom below and speak to the jubilant crowd assembled in a victory celebration.

The senator seemed reluctant. Someone asked him if he had information about the returns other than the figure on the TV tube.

"No," he said. "I used to get all sorts of reports but now television gets it all first. It's getting to be an awful bore."

Mrs. Ethel Kennedy was sitting on the other side of the bed and someone said the vote showed that not everybody disliked her husband. She took a playful poke at the speaker.

"I wonder if we should take Freckles down," Kennedy said. "You know they say I used a dog and an astronaut to win."

John Glenn, who was on the other side of the room, chuckled.

Kennedy still seemed in no mood to move. He had been surfing all afternoon at the beach at Malibu and took one good spill. He rubbed his hand over the goose egg over his right eye and reminded a news reporter that he wanted him to come to the party at The Factory, a discotheque, later that night.

Bill Barry, Kennedy's bodyguard, was off in a corner chatting. The senator had declined

any police protection and Barry had the responsibility for his safety, although pro football player Roosevelt Grier and decathlon champion Rafer Johnson often helped in crowds.

"I got mixed up with the crowds and I can't see," Barry was saying. "And I get tired. Maybe I won't be able to react quickly enough. I wish somebody would talk to him."

It was midnight now and finally Bobby got up and put on his coat jacket and straightened his tie and walked out the door toward a service elevator.

Someone asked if he ever wondered if it was all worth it. Implicit in the question was the tragic death of his brother in Dallas four and one-half years before.

"I like politics," Kennedy said. "It's an honorable adventure. Lord Tweedsmuir said that: 'It's an honorable adventure.'"

Then Kennedy and his wife and Barry and Jess Unruh and a few others got into a service elevator and went down to the second floor and through a kitchen area and out onto a small stage overlooking the Embassy Room which was filled to bursting with a crowd perspiring under the brilliant television lights and buoyed up with elation and other spirits.

Kennedy got into the mood immediately. He played around with the microphone and asked whether people could hear him.

"I want to first express my high regard to Don Drysdale who pitched his sixth straight shutout tonight and I hope that we have as good fortune in our campaign," he said.

Then he turned serious.

"What I think is—what I think is quite clear

Turn to Page 5

Continued from Page 8

...that we can work together in the last anal-
...and that what has been going on in the
...the division, the violence, the disen-
...ment with our society, the division
...whether it's between black and white, be-
...the poor and the more affluent or be-
...ween age groups or over the war in Vietnam,
...at we can start to work together. We are a
...great country and an unselfish country and a
...passionate country. And I intend to make
...at my basis for running in the period of the
...at few months."

He expressed his thanks to his supporters
and then wound up:

"Mayor (Sam) Yorty has just sent me a
message that we've been here too long
already. So my thanks to all of you and on to
the ago and let's win there."

A push through the crowd

When he turned and jumped down the two
...off the back of the stage and started the
...push through the crowd that extended
...her hands to shake his or just touch him.

Mrs. Kennedy, pregnant with their first
...child, was on the

...on the...
...the...
...between him and the
...senator.

Karl Uecker, the assistant maitre d' at the
Ambassador, had Kennedy by the right hand
and was leading him through a pantry toward
the Colonial Room where the "pencil press"
reporters were banging out their stories. It
was a last-minute change of plans. Kennedy
originally had been scheduled to go down-
stairs to another victory celebration in a ball-
room on the ground floor.

Kennedy stopped to talk with the kitchen
help. He shook hands with Juan Romero, a 17-
year-old husky.

Seconds later, a tiny little fellow named Sir-
han Bishara Sirhan stepped off a tray rack,
shouted "Kennedy, you son of a bitch" and
shoved a .22 caliber revolver an inch from the
senator's ear and pulled the trigger.

The gunman kept firing until he had emp-
tied the eight cartridges in the chamber. Two
other bullets entered Kennedy's body below
his right armpit and the others felled five
persons standing nearby.

It was 12:15 a.m., Wednesday, June 5, 1968.

In one lightning moment the old superstition
came true — tragedy big and small, come in
threes. John F. Kennedy, Dr. Martin Luther
King Jr., Robert F. Kennedy.

There was a frozen instant of incom-
prehension and then it was pandemonium.

Kennedy crumbled to the floor. Juan
Romero bent over him and put a rosary in his
hand. A wild-eyed Ethel Kennedy came tear-

ing her way through the crowd, knelt in a
pool of blood and began shouting:

"Get back, all of you! Get out! Please get
out! For God's sake, give him room to
breathe."

Eight feet away, Barry, Grier and Johnson
were struggling for the gun and pinning the
tiny assassin down on a steam table.

In the ballroom, a noise like "Chinese
firecrackers" had been heard and then shouts
for a doctor went out over the public address
system and the word spread: "Bobby's been
shot."

Pretty "Kennedy girls" in white blouses and
navy blue skirts and straw skimmer hats
burst into tears. In the pantry, men beat their
fists on steel tables in frustration and others
fought to get at Sirhan, yelling, "Kill him!
Kill him!"

Two police officers arrived and literally ran
with Sirhan out of the hotel. They whisked
him into a patrol car and sped off to Ram-
parts Station. California legislative leader
Unruh was in the car and Sirhan mumbled, "I
did it for my country." For the rest of the

...and well into the next day the 34-year-
...refused to tell police
...not even his name.

...arrives

It seemed an eternity until an ambulance
arrived. Then two attendants carried Kennedy
out on a stretcher with Ethel holding back
their pace so they wouldn't jostle her husband.
They sped to Central Receiving Hospital.
Kennedy had sunk into a coma.

A young doctor at Central Receiving ex-
amined Kennedy and then roughly slapped his
face in an attempt at revival. Ethel Ken-
nedy, sitting on a high metal stool, gasped.
The doctor handed her a stethoscope and put
it to Kennedy's heart. An expression of relief
spread over Ethel Kennedy's face and she
said: "Will he live?"

"Yes, right now he's going to be all right,"
the doctor said.

Father Thomas Peacha of nearby St.
Basil's Parish entered the room and per-
formed the last rites of the Roman Catholic
Church.

But at that time, no one could comprehend
that Kennedy would die.

Kennedy stayed at Central Receiving less
than 30 minutes. Then he was transferred to
Good Samaritan Hospital. A crowd which
grew to 800 persons gathered in the street
outside. Autos were bumper to bumper on
Wilshire Blvd., some of them bearing a
placard which came out of nowhere, "Pray
for Bobby."

Surgeons spent three hours and 40 minutes
removing the fragments of the bullet from his
brain

From all over the world, the Kennedy clan congregated. Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy flew from New York. She had been awakened by a London call from Prince Radziwill, the husband of her sister Lee.

A grim Edward Kennedy came from Massachusetts.

Frank Mankiewicz, the senator's press secretary, hid his grief and dealt with the horde of newsmen.

At 2 a.m. June 6, Mankiewicz read a brief statement. Robert Kennedy had died at 1:44 a.m.

There was a long period while an autopsy was performed. The family waited in patience. They did not want a recurrence of the shadow that still hangs over John Kennedy's death in Dallas.

Late that Wednesday afternoon the plane

finally took off to carry Robert Kennedy's body back to the East and burial in Arlington beside his brother.

It has been a year now since those shattering days.

This correspondent sat for 3½ months in a fortress courtroom for the trial of Sirhan. Sirhan said he could not even remember killing Kennedy, that he was in a "trance" when he fired the fatal bullets.

A jury of seven men and five women did not believe him. They sentenced him to death. He sits now in death row in San Quentin awaiting an order to enter the gas chamber which probably will never come.

It has been only a year and yet it seems long, long ago that Robert Kennedy died.

"I like politics," he had said. "It is an honorable adventure."