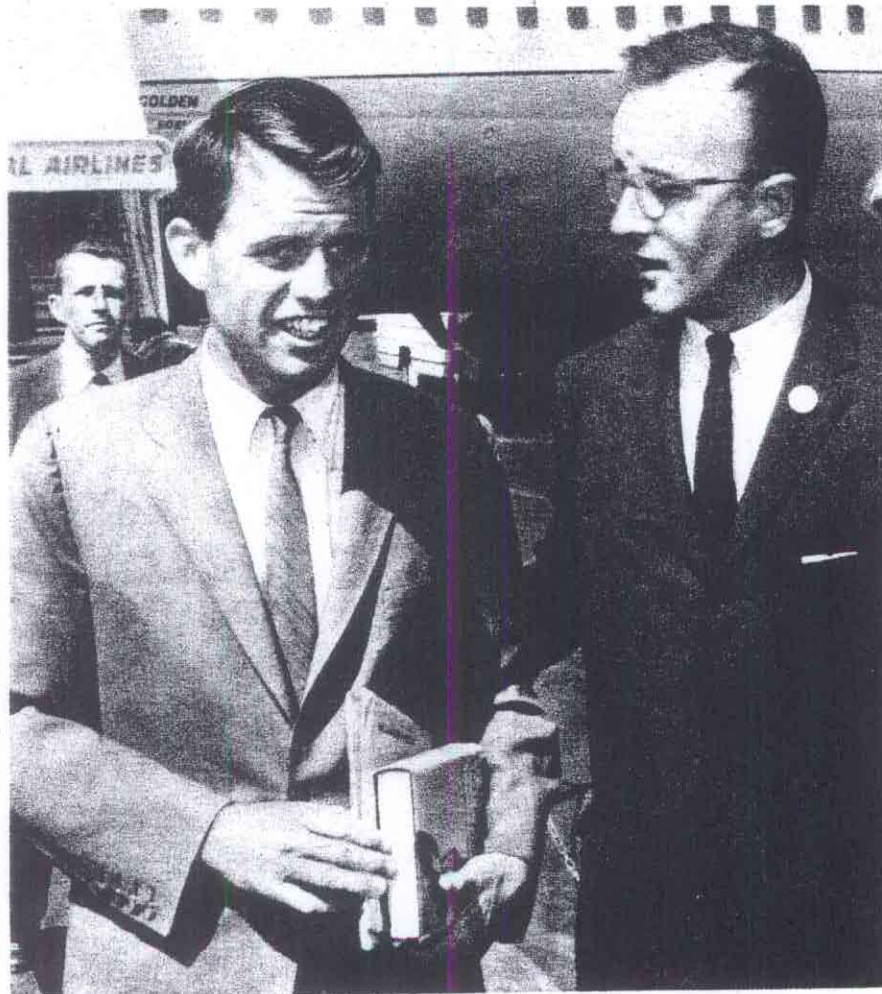


Potomac Profile

And so what happened to RFK's Joe Dolan?

By John Carmody



A favorite Dolan memory: Colorado political tactician has a hurried chat between planes at the Denver airport in April, 1960, with candidate John F. Kennedy's strategist-brother.

At 48, Joe Dolan is thinned down from the Washington-New York days. The hair is getting sparser. The fey quality is back: the Groucho Marx business with the eyebrows. The slouching in the chair as if life were only some long bullsession. The oddly cryptic speech. The shorthand jokes that were a Robert Kennedy trademark, too—and a devilish way of communication.

Joe still bursts into unexpected (and unrequested) song—all the verses of "Long Black Veil," "Grand Canyon Line." Then he'll perform some shy, unexpected kindness—one of those gestures that used to endear him to the

fresh-from-the-convent girls on the Kennedy staff. Although he came from Long Island, he is still somehow more Boston Irish than anybody around.

Joe Dolan is pretty happy these days. He's gotten back to his adopted homebase, in Colorado, and he's making a lot of money for the first time in his life and he's zeroing in on the two boys, Tom who is 8 now and Peter, 5, because that is one of the things he learned from his friend Robert. And when he gets a chance he and his wife, Marty, sneak off for a little skiing out in the Rockies.

Until Los Angeles, in June of 1968, Joe had been Robert F.

Continued on page 9

Continued from page 7

Kennedy's top inside political adviser for four, maybe five years. And the two of them had gone back to 1956, when brother John began the run for the White House and Joe was put on Ted Sorensen's Christmas card list out in Denver.

Fred Dutton, the brilliant Kennedy strategist and adviser, remembers Joe Dolan in the last years as the man who gave Robert "the reading on specific people, projects and ideas." Peter Edelman and Adam Walinsky may have been the idea men and the writers but it was Joe Dolan on the staff who looked ahead to the intangibles and the political relationships that those ideas affected.

"Joe was always doing the things that you couldn't reduce to a piece of paper," Dutton recalls. "In the best Irish tradition he was the one who was canny on politics and how men would act in a tough situation.

"I remember, in late 1967, Joe would leave the office on the Hill and come down to my law office where nobody could hear and make those phone calls around the country to get a reading on

1968."

But Joe always had this knack for anonymity, for being the perfect number two man and keeping his mouth shut. He had been head usher at St. Patrick's Cathedral in June and then had joined that melancholy diaspora ("I just stole away") from Washington two Augusts ago, handing the Senate office keys to Frank Mankiewicz. Joe was still the member of the RFK staff one heard the least about.

Later, somebody from the old Justice Department crowd would say that Joe was traveling a lot and that he was still taking it hard. And he got his name in the papers for a day when Rep. Wright Patman got sore about the Ford Foundation grants to eight of the Kennedy people that winter, but that was about it. He had been the oldest man on the staff when the Senator was killed and he had known him longer than anyone else and since maybe 1962 they had become very good friends. For a time in 1968 Joe really didn't know what in the hell to do with himself.

The Ford grant was for \$18,556 over six months. And it grew out of an idea he and his old Colorado friend, Justice Byron White, had

been kicking around for a long time: the lack of good law school courses on the role of the lawyer in the legislative process in this country.

There is a whiff of the schoolmaster about Joe Dolan (he taught French in the Army during World War II; he conducted a class for Colorado bar examinees during the 1950s) and, as he toured 23 campuses making his Ford survey, what had been therapy turned into a job-hunting trip. The most serious nibble he received was from Notre Dame (which he turned down). He tried especially hard at three prominent Western universities—he always preferred the West—but he found that the faculties eventually were bogged down in intramural squabbles that precluded him.

do." Shortly after Christmas, 1968, he got it, in the form of a young Wall Street genius who was about to move his new and booming conglomerate out to Denver.

William M. White Jr. is just 30 years old. In the past several years, since his father was killed in an automobile accident, he has put together a jazzy and very successful corporate mix out of land holdings, agriculture, sugar refining, Shakey's Pizza Parlor franchises, Christmas tree farms and something he likes to call "concept stores marketing." Called Great Western United, it had sales of \$275 million last year and now is headquartered in Denver.

Bill White is uncommonly rich.

Joe had been a very good lawyer. He had graduated third in his class from St. John's of New York in 1947 and had gone to work for the Wall Street law firm of Irving R. Kaufman—who soon became a prominent federal jurist. It was Kaufman who early on had steered Dolan to service in the antitrust division at the Justice Department and later, when he opted to move to Denver, pushed through a transfer for Joe.

From such old connections and his service as Robert Kennedy's top man in New York State late in 1968 came at least three top offers, from Pan Am, from NBC, from the top New York Democratic law firm—all to serve in Washington as their man. But Washington, like New York, no longer appealed to him. He wanted "a ticket back to Colora-

He has already made *Time* AND *Playboy*. He is Yale (*magna cum laude*), he is a financial whiz, handsome, Mod, and very Colorado society (Mother is a Thatcher). He is also *au courant* in New York and Western liberal Republican circles. He owns a nice chunk of *New York* magazine. He has connections.

Early last year, the then U.S. Attorney in New York, Robert Morgenthau, called Bill White out in Aspen, where he was skiing (and where he also owns a bank). Bob Morgenthau asked him to look up a lawyer named Dolan who was out there at the time. Bob told Bill he ought to hire him as his personal attorney. Bill White said he'd look him over but he told Morgenthau he didn't know who Joe Dolan was.

The young capitalist (whom

Continued on page 36

Continued from page 10

you just *might* mistake for a young Kennedy with no rough edges) and the phlegmatic political pro (Says art collector White: "he reminds me of a minimal sculpture") got along extremely well.

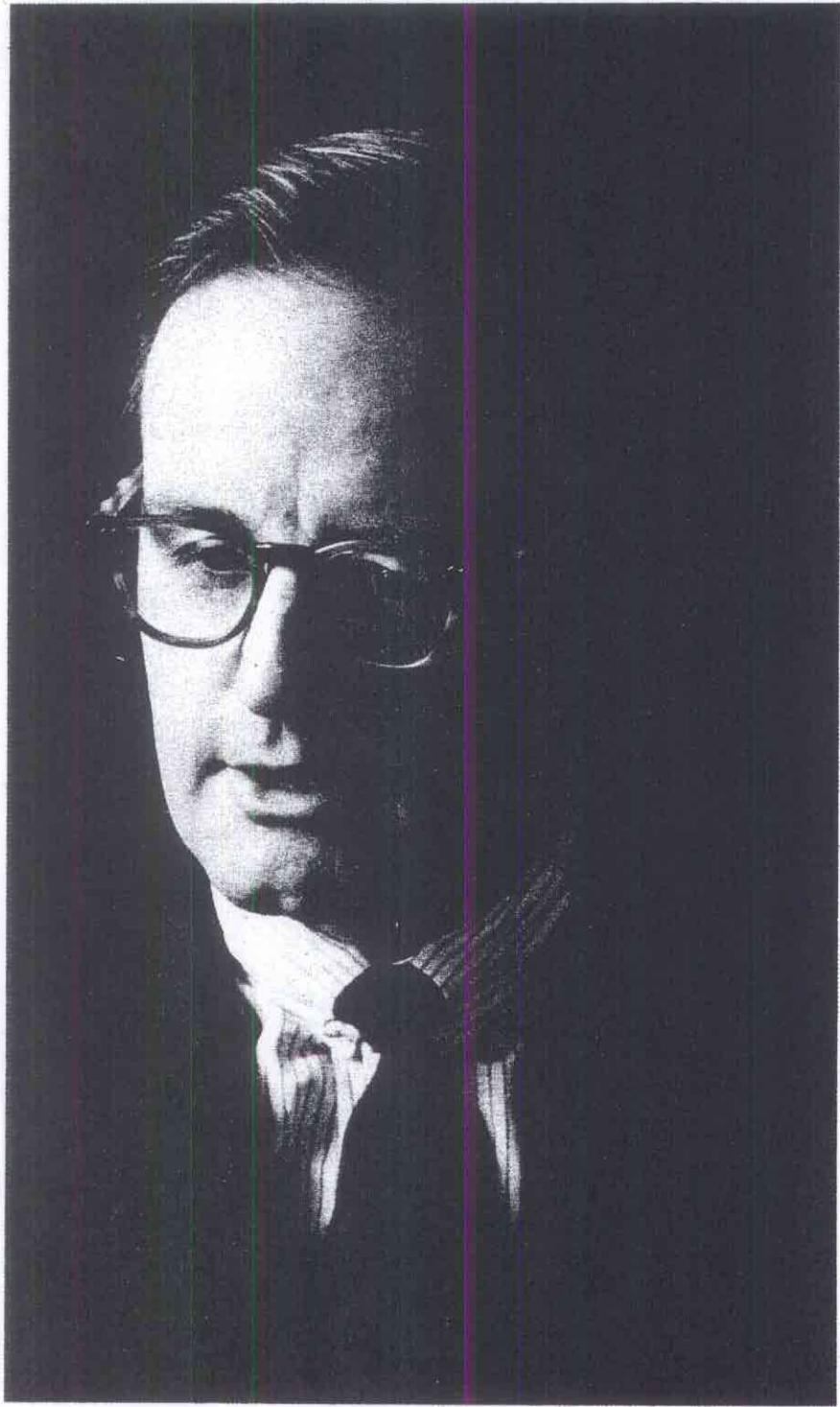
Though Dolan had not had direct corporate experience, he had run a staff of 80 for Robert Kennedy and managed a budget of many hundreds of thousands a year. He had been one of the nation's masters in problem solving and crisis management.

White hired him as "secretary and director of administrative planning" and then, soon after, moved him into a tough spot. He had just purchased (for \$14 million) the Shakey franchises and had discovered serious manage-

ment problems at the top of the \$50 million a year enterprise. He sent Joe to Burlingame, Calif., headquarters and gave him carte blanche (although he also sent along some financial brains to help). Dolan turned the business around.

President Dolan is now in charge of nearly 400 Shakey's franchises, plus four Prime Time steak houses. Shakey's is about to expand into Europe (including Italy, yet) and in the past nine months the per-franchise annual gross climbed from the rate of \$175,000 to \$205,000. Dolan has recently been up to his neck in a \$10 to \$20 million antitrust suit (brought by franchisers over the mandatory use of Shakey-wholesaled spices) which he expects to

Continued on page 38



Joe Dolan at 48: great times with the finest man he ever knew.

Continued from page 36

resolve by liberalizing the fee agreement. The headquarters is due to move soon to Denver. Joe is now also the man who dispenses about \$350,000 a year from a White family foundation ("I just turned down Saul Alinsky"). For all this activity, Joe receives an estimated \$50,000, off a base salary of \$40,000, plus commissions, plus a liberal Great Western stock option. He has a beautiful English secretary named Tessa Dalton. And he keeps but two small formal unsigned pictures of Jack and Robert Kennedy on his office wall in Burlingame. There are some on the small Great Western headquarters staff who don't know who he was. And Joe doesn't tell them.

The word at Great Western is that Joe Dolan has been already a large success. And that if Colorado Democratic politics don't get him in the next few years, he'll be moving up at Great Western when Republican politics in Colorado are expected to get young Bill White—who has some pretty big ambitions along those lines (And is not above asking Old Pro

Dolan for advice once in a while. When a recent trial balloon went up for White as Governor, Joe gently asked him if he thought he really wanted the job at his age. White received the message.)

White himself is a little in awe of Dolan—as much as a millionaire ever can be about one of his employees, anyway—and he likes to tell about the memo he got from Joe in New York last March 18.

It predicted the Democrats would cut themselves up in the primary for the New York mayor's office and that too many would run; that Mario Procaccino would take the primary; that Republican John Lindsay would lose his primary; would run as a Liberal and in November would win the 3-man runoff with 41.8 per cent of the vote—the exact figure, as it turned out 8 months later. Bill White has a lot of *au courant* Republican friends back in New York but, he admits now, none of them quite *that au*.

Of Joe he says: "There was no question that when I hired him he wanted to get away from New York. He was a man from the grave at first. But now he's come to terms with himself as a man. Still it's sad to be with him sometimes. I keep thinking he ought to go back to politics. He gets

Continued on page 40

Continued from page 38

strange phone calls from eminent people all over the country all the time. But the sad thing, the funny thing—there's something missing . . . Joe has an unrequited love affair with his country. He could and should be at the center of running America."

The phone calls Joe Dolan gets aren't all that strange. John Lindsay's aides call him. And Jesse Unruh. And Joseph Alioto. John Tunney. "I'm not withdrawn from the political process. Bill hasn't put any inhibitions on me," says Joe. "I'm a free consultant for anybody who asks me." He even gave Bardyl Tirana some advice when he ran for the school board back in Washington (in part because Tirana was in charge of the Kennedy cars in New York when Robert ran for the Senate in 1964).

"I give advice to people regardless of where they stood with Robert or Jack back in the old days," he'll say. "I don't believe in the Martins and the Coys theory. You know, 'who shot who.'" Joe Dolan pauses. "Maybe 'shot' is the

wrong word."

We had a long chat with Joe Dolan recently out in Colorado. It was a gray day—too gray for skiing—and he lounged around an apartment at the foot of Ajax Mountain in Aspen, taking up some high-powered glasses once in a while to see if he could spot his wife out on the slopes, going over to play a Judy Collins record or a Joan Baez ("My girls").

He was taking a two-week breather, attending a morning seminar at the Institute for Humanistic Studies there, skiing when he could in the afternoons. He was relaxed and he was happy. And yet, as he talked, Robert Kennedy kept getting into the conversation, not as part of the history of his last 14 years but as the friend he missed. Once he started to describe how tough the "kid brother" had been as an administrator and he stopped and smiled and looked up at the ceiling and said "God, he'd shiv me if he heard me today" and then he stopped smiling and talking and walked back to the picture window until his mood changed again.

He has a big house now, he said, south of Denver in a posh suburb called Cherry Hills Village. It has two and a half acres of land and Canadian geese stop there sometimes which delights

the boys because it reminds them of their place in McLean.

He said there was only one thing that got him when he had started househunting out at Cherry Hills Village. In all of the big houses he was shown through, the kids had grown and gone off to college and in every one of the preserved-childhood girls' rooms would be the obligatory Peter Fonda or Beatles posters and some dolls—and a picture of Robert F. Kennedy. "There aren't five Democrats in that whole precinct out there," said Joe Dolan, in some odd combination of expertise, pride, humor, wistfulness.

He has a new song, of course, ("We sell fun at Shakey's. Also pizzas.") and he sang it that afternoon, several times. He has his own ideas about 1972 ("I'm for McGovern in '72 . . . Muskie is second, at least with me . . . I see Teddy making a run for it, winning the primary in Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Wisconsin, West Virginia, losing big to Burch Bayh in Indiana and losing in California . . .") and thinking about that memo to Bill White in 1969 the listener writes it down . . . very carefully . . . not that Joe thinks McGovern is going to win, mind you, it's just that his personal courage is something

Joe admires.

He is violently anti-Lyndon Johnson, in part over Vietnam, in large part for dozens of Kennedy slights over the years (and the next afternoon his wife tells how Joe had bought a Stetson in Denver along with Wellington boots in November, 1963, and that Robert, after Dallas, started calling all Texans "the hats" and Joe had never put on his outfit in Washington after all).

And all the while, his talk ranging from the David Wolper film on RFK ("they left out the Day of Affirmation speech in South Africa, dammit") to his hobby of reading F.A.A. airplane crash reports ("they're always a combination of screwups and it's screwups that produce wars"), the old Robert Kennedy keeps sneaking back in, a re-ordering of memories after nearly two years. ("Bob was kind of interested in the same thing and we'd needle the transport associations once in a while but safety in air crashes . . . well Robert never got around to it either. He never got the chance . . .").

He and Robert hadn't been all

Continued on page 42

Continued from page 40

that close at first. In fact, he remembered, he didn't like him very much ("he *was* abrasive") at the start. Joe and Byron White had been sent to the Justice Department in 1961 by President Kennedy to "kind of watch over the kid brother." For a while Robert hadn't paid much attention to the Deputy Attorney General who was in charge of federal judgeship selections. Then one day, in May, 1961, he recalls, they were all meeting in Robert's office over a civil rights disorder in Montgomery, Ala., and Kennedy had dispatched Byron White to the scene. "Who should I take with me?" Dolan recalls White asking. "He looked around that room—he had this funny way of looking at me, he'd bounce jokes off me sometimes—and he said 'take Dolan.' And I liked him right then. It was a mess down there and he'd picked me."

After that, until November, 1963, Dolan was most often the

number two man sent South with the Lou Oberdorfers, Nick Katzenbachs and Whites and Burke Marshalls, the liaison with Robert back at the office and sometimes the White House. And still "Robert never complimented me. Never patted me on the back," at those Tuesday-Thursday luncheons when he and John Siegenthaler and Ed Guthman and the Solicitor General would meet with RFK. "I'd tell him something I thought I'd done well and he'd give me that look and say 'yes, I know.' That's as close as I got." Yet by the time of the Cuban missile crisis, he had come to understand what a load the kid brother carried and the admiration had turned to affection.

Then came Dallas. Joe Dolan remembers the 1963 Christmas party that Robert had promised to give for the Justice Department staff's children and how he'd "looked like hell" making his first public appearance for it and how "he walked across the room when he came into the office and he put his arm around me and didn't say a word." After that, they were close. He and Robert went back, the gesture had said, to 1956 and the good days.

"You know, in all those years," said Joe Dolan, "he only criticized me once. It was at Justice and I'd botched something with Jim Eastland. I hung up and said Je-

sus, back to Colorado and a minute and a half later the phone rang. 'I just talked to Jim,' Robert said. 'We'd better not do that anymore.' " And that was it.

"That's why he was such a great administrator. He didn't want to hear the reasons why you hadn't done anything. 'Why don't you just do it?' he'd say. And that's why he'd have made such a good president . . . Better than that, he was able to hear the bad news continuously.

"You know, when I think of him—now it's the fun things. He was out in Sun Valley early in 1968 and one day there was a poll that showed him doing well. We giggled over the phone a little and then it occurred to me 'that this is the first time I've ever given you (Robert) good news in all the time we've been together.' And we giggled a little more."

And so the memories from the man who used to give Robert Kennedy only the bad news in places like Suite 8215 at the Biltmore in L.A. in 1960 and the Esso

Building here and 299 Park in New York, going away back.

But it's an afternoon out in Colorado now, out in the state where you can read that Joe Dolan may go for attorney general or Congress or may become, eventually, the U.S. Attorney in Denver.

Of course nobody knows for certain. Least of all Joe Dolan. He likes his job at Great Western. He's got his sense of humor back. He's got a den full of great photographed memories out in Cherry Hills Village. He's starting to see Robert and Jack as whole as he probably ever will. Or ever wants to. He'll say "Bobby was the finest man I ever knew . . . he taught me everything I know about politics and about children" and he'll smile. But that will remind him of something else.

Like a few weeks ago, when he was lecturing little Tom about some 8-year-old breach of manners.

He told the youngster how important manners were in later life. And how they could even help him become President of the United States. But then the boy, who used to play at Hickory Hill with the whole gang, had said to him: "Oh, I wouldn't want to be President, dad. I'd get shot." And Joe Dolan, telling the story, gets a look on his Irish map. ■