

Evelyn Lincoln, Secretary To Kennedy, Is Dead at 85

By ROBERT McG. THOMAS Jr.

Evelyn Lincoln, the devoted personal secretary who served President John F. Kennedy from the day he entered the Senate to the day he was assassinated, died on Thursday at Georgetown University Hospital in Washington. She was 85 and lived in Chevy Chase, Md.

Her family said the cause of death was complications after cancer surgery.

If the relationship between an executive and a secretary can be likened to a marriage, the one between John Fitzgerald Kennedy and Evelyn Norton Lincoln was a bond forged in political heaven.

When Mrs. Lincoln, then a 43-year-old Congressional aide, came to work for him in 1953, the new Senator from Massachusetts was everything she had been looking for in a Capitol Hill boss: a charismatic politician with Presidential possibilities.

And when he hired her, Mr. Kennedy, then a 35-year-old bachelor, got the secretary every politician longs for: an efficient, savvy confidante whose devotion to him and his ambitions knew no bounds.

The daughter of John Norton, a member of Congress from Nebraska, Evelyn Norton was born in Polk County, Neb., on June 25, 1909. She graduated from George Washington University in Washington and studied law there for two years. Her husband, Harold W. Lincoln, whom she met at the university, was a Federal worker.

In 1952, after working for an obscure Georgia Congressman, Mrs. Lincoln began looking for a politician with Presidential possibilities and found Mr. Kennedy.

Within weeks of their first meeting, she had made herself virtually indispensable. In addition to her official duties, she once recalled, she was also required to telephone the women he was interested in to ask them for movie dates with the Senator.

Mrs. Lincoln claimed to be one of the first to know that his romance with Jacqueline Bouvier was serious. "He called her himself," she said.

Mr. Kennedy's election to the Presidency elevated his personal secretary to a public figure. Her

office, next to the President's, became a nerve center at the White House, partly because of the candy dish she kept there along with the humidor full of gift cigars not up to Presidential standards, and partly because of the West Wing's layout.

Mrs. Lincoln had a direct view of the President in his office. And the President had to walk through her office to get to Cabinet meetings. Her office also had a television set on which the President and aides watched the nation's first manned space flight and other major events.

(Her office's strategic location, Mrs. Lincoln once revealed, was put to devious use by Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson. She said he used to cut through her office to give White House aides the impression he had been closeted with the President.)

Mrs. Lincoln, who was in the third bus back of the President's car when he was shot in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963, became a macabre footnote to assassination lore linking two slain Presidents elected exactly 100 years apart when it was widely noted that Abraham Lincoln had a secretary named Kennedy and President Kennedy had a secretary named Lincoln.

Although she continued to work for the White House for a while after the assassination, Mrs. Lincoln never hid the disdain she felt for her idol's successor.

Before his trip to Dallas, Mrs. Lincoln later said, President Kennedy had told her that he planned to drop Mr. Johnson from the 1964 Democratic ticket.

The full extent of Mrs. Lincoln's devotion to Mr. Kennedy did not become apparent until after his death when she revealed that she had saved virtually every scrap of paper that had crossed his desk in the White House, including idle doodles and jottings she sometimes had to dig out of wastebaskets.

Mrs. Lincoln, who was one of the seven original incorporators of the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum in Boston, gave the papers to the library, where the doodles and other ephemera are among the most popular exhibits, library officials said yesterday.

Mrs. Lincoln published two volumes of memoirs, "My Twelve



Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Evelyn Lincoln with her boss and idol, President John F. Kennedy

Years with John F. Kennedy," (1965) and "Kennedy and Johnson," (1968).

She returned to Capitol Hill as a secretary from 1967 to 1973, but always had an eye out for a potential President.

In 1982, convinced she had found

one, she campaigned for Senator Gary Hart of Colorado, telling a crowd, "The people who loved John Kennedy should love Gary Hart. His candidacy collapsed in a scandal triggered by womanizing.

Mrs. Lincoln is survived by her husband.