

Lest we forget, Nov. 22 also marks the day that

AUSTIN, Texas — Nov. 22 is not only the anniversary of the day John F. Kennedy was assassinated, it is also the day that Vice President Lyndon Johnson became President of the United States. They had served three years together, an odd couple, the cool, rich Boston Yankee and the superheated populist from the Texas hill country west of here.

The conventional wisdom then was that Kennedy never wanted Johnson, the majority leader of the Senate, as his running mate in 1960; that the vice-presidential offer was a courtesy he expected Johnson to refuse. Further, it was said, Kennedy had no regard for Johnson's advice and counsel — and that he actually intended to dump Johnson from the ticket in 1964.

That's all wrong. To begin with, Sen. Kennedy always knew that Sen. Johnson would be his strongest running mate. He wanted to win, and the only way to do that was to carry Texas and to hold the Democratic South with a running mate at least marginally acceptable to Northern Democrats. Only one man fit that description:

Kennedy then said, "Don't worry, Lyndon, if anything happens to you, Sam Rayburn and I will give you the biggest funeral Austin ever saw."

Lyndon Baines Johnson.

In researching my latest book, *President Kennedy: Profile of Power*, it was quickly obvious that Kennedy saw his vice president as a proud, moody and difficult man. He also wondered whether Johnson was a coward.

When he asked Johnson to go to South Vietnam in 1961, he was shocked when the vice president replied, "Mr. President, I don't want to embarrass you by getting my head blown off in Saigon."

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if anything happens to you, Sam Rayburn and I will give you the biggest funeral Austin Texas ever saw."

Johnson did go and plunged into crowds there the way he did back in Texas. And when Kennedy heard that his staff was calling the vice president "Colonel Cornpone," he chewed out one of his most important aides, Kenny O'Donnell:

"I just want you to know one thing. Lyndon Johnson was majority leader of the U.S. Senate; he was elected to office several times by the people. He was the No. 1 Democrat in the United States, elected by us to be our leader. I'm President of the United States. He doesn't like that. He thinks he's 10 times more important than I am; he happens to be that kind of a fellow.

"But he thinks you're nothing but a clerk. Just keep that right in your mind . . . Elected officials have a code no matter whether they like each other or hate each other . . . you have never been elected to anything by anybody, and you are dealing with a very insecure, sensitive man with a huge ego. I want you literally to kiss his a-

Lyndon Johnson became President

from one end of Washington to the other."

It was in civil rights that Lyndon Johnson played his most important role by helping persuade the President in June of 1963 that the time had come for the government to take sides in the developing civil war between white Southern governments and demonstrating Negroes. The President had been trying to stay above the struggle, saying it was a problem for the courts — reacting to attacks on Freedom Riders in Alabama by telling his civil rights adviser, a young man named Harris Wofford, to "get your goddamn friends off those buses."

On June 11, 1963, as National Guard troops moved onto the campus of the University of Alabama to protect the first two black students admitted that day, Kennedy went on national television to say:

"This is not a legal or legislative issue alone . . . we are confronted primarily with a moral issue. It is as old as the Scriptures and as clear as the American Constitution. It is time to act in the Congress, in your state and local legislative body, and above all, in all of our daily lives. A great change

is at hand, and our test, our obligation, is to make that revolution, that change, peaceful and constructive for all."

On Nov. 18, 1963, President Kennedy toured Florida with his friend Sen. George Smathers in the first testing of the political waters for the 1964 campaign. Smathers brought up newspaper stories speculating that Kennedy was considering dropping Johnson as his running mate. Kennedy replied:

"George, you have some intelligence, I presume. Can you see me now in a terrible fight with Lyndon Johnson, which means I'll blow the South? You know, I love this job, I love every second of it . . . Smathers, you just haven't got any sense. If Lyndon thinks that, he ought to think about it. I don't want to get licked. I really don't care whether Lyndon gets licked, but I don't want to get licked, and he's going to be my vice president because he helps me!"

Richard Reeves' other books include "Passage to Peshawar: Pakistan Between the Hindu Kush and the Arabian Sea" and "The Reagan Detour: Conservative Revolutionary."