

ASSASSINATIONS

A Warning Five Years Later

All week, the lines of sightseers wound up the hill in Arlington National Cemetery, where the two assassinated brothers lie buried. On what would have been Robert F. Kennedy's 43rd birthday, his brother Ted brought his own and the slain Senator's family to pray and leave flowers. Two days later, on the fifth anniversary of John F. Kennedy's death in Dallas, the family returned to visit the flame-lit grave a little farther up the hill. In New York, Mrs. Aristotle Onassis took John and Caroline Kennedy to a special Mass for their father—one of many such memorial services across the country.

Preventive Measures. Others continued to replay the events of Nov. 22, 1963, and June 5, 1968, as if to exorcise a demon from the national spirit. No fewer than nine new books were on the market in the U.S. eulogizing John or Robert Kennedy, or probing their assassinations. In Russia, Anatoly Gromyko, son of Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, published a mildly sympathetic study on J.F.K.—the first book-length examination of any kind to be printed in the Soviet Union—entitled *The 1036 Days of President Kennedy*, borrowing heavily from Arthur Schlesinger and Theodore Sorensen, but mostly picturing the late President in a struggle with "monopoly capital." In Chicago and California, two symposia of psychiatrists and other scholars examined why assassinations happen—and how they might be avoided.

At Stanford University, several participants advocated registration of all guns—if only, said one, to "see if this reduces crime or death rates." Other preventive measures were linked to the predictability of assassin types. Drs. Robert L. Taylor and Alfred E. Weisz noted

that of the nine men involved in the eight known attempts on the lives of American Presidents, all were Caucasian males aged 24 to 40. All were smaller than average in stature. All were unknowns, except John Wilkes Booth. Most importantly, "each of these men had some cause or grievance that appeared obsessional, if not delusional, in intensity." (Richard Lawrence, for instance, who tried to kill Andrew Jackson thought that he was Richard III of England and that the U.S. owed him huge sums of money.) Careful typing might permit psychiatrists to help—or security men to keep checking on—potential assassins. New laws requiring waiting periods before guns could be purchased, the experts said, might make it harder for such men to obtain weapons.

Russian Roulette. Both meetings suggested that it is not only the potential assassin who must be watched but the President or candidate, lest he exhibit too much bravado. "I play Russian roulette every time I get up in the morning," Robert Kennedy once remarked, "but there is nothing I could do about it." The psychiatrists urged that Presidents and presidential candidates be prohibited by law from "close contact" with crowds when a visit has been announced in advance. That is particularly urgent, they suggested, because assassinations themselves breed violent reactions in disturbed people, making other assassinations more likely.

Robert Kennedy, talking with Novelist Romain Gary in the weeks after Martin Luther King's murder and just before his own, might have agreed with the analysis, if not the prescription. "I know there will be an assassination attempt sooner or later," Kennedy told Gary. "Not so much for political reasons: just due to contagion and emulation. We are living in an era of extraordinary psychic contagion."

grass and fescue on the North Lawn, which faces Pennsylvania Ave.

Though most voters have the impression that a new President inherits a virtually empty Executive Mansion, hundreds of specialists remain, no matter what the Administration. For years Williams and his six-man detail have sown the turf, sprayed the elms and broadcast electronic squawks through a loudspeaker system to keep off the starlings and sparrows. The gardeners and more than 300 other permanent White House staff members—from Steve Martini, the executive barber since 1952, to White House Upholsterer Larry Arata—are likely to be staying on after Jan. 20.

There is no statutory permanent staff at the White House. But few new Presidents could easily survive in the 132-room mansion without its nonpartisan hired help. Thus, White House Calligrapher Sandy Fox will doubtless be busy scrawling banknote script on thousands of invitations for Nixon state dinners, as he has since the early days of John Kennedy's Administration, and Curator James Ketchum will continue to watch over the White House art and china collections.

Although many will be departing with their bosses, some secretaries will remain. Last week Lyndon Johnson gathered them to express his gratitude for their labors and present each with a charm bearing the presidential seal.

One Bequest. The dominant figure on the permanent White House staff is Executive Assistant William J. Hopkins, 58, a bald, self-effacing factotum who joined Herbert Hoover in 1931, and has been the presidential office manager since 1943. Hopkins commands a crew of 255 secretaries, stenographers, messengers and telephone operators. He is, says Lyndon Johnson, "an indispensable instrument" to the management of the presidency.

Lady Bird has already introduced Pat Nixon to Hopkins' domestic counterpart, Chief Usher J. Bernard West, who presides over some 70 cooks, butlers, maids, elevator operators, electricians and carpenters. Under his overall supervision are five housemen who constantly wax and buff the floors; a full-time window cleaner who has 147 windows and eight skylights to cope with; and three flower arrangers who keep busy adorning the twelve guest rooms. After 27 years of White House ceremonies—including J.F.K.'s funeral and Lynda Bird's wedding—West says with equanimity: "We never have crises."

Besides the workers who will be staying on, the Nixons may inherit another White House regular. Blanco, the President's sometimes shy and nervous white collie, has finally grown accustomed to the grounds, and L.B.J. is hesitant to transplant him to the nontransitional environment of Texas.

DEMOCRATS

What Might Have Been

Footnotes to history:

In 1964, Lyndon Johnson was seriously thinking of making amiable Mike Mansfield, majority leader of the Senate, his running mate instead of Hubert Humphrey. That way, the President reasoned, Humphrey could become majority leader, giving L.B.J. far more forceful Senate leadership and Humphrey a bigger reputation for an eventual presidential campaign of his own. It would also have spared Humphrey what was to become one of his most onerous burdens—his overly close association with an unpopular Administration. There were reports last week that Humphrey, too, had some unorthodox ideas this year about his own running mate: he wanted New York's Republican Governor Nelson Rockefeller.