

The Nation

THE WASHINGTON POST

Sunday, Sept. 5, 1965

E3

Kennedy Left a Wordy

*At Least Nine of His Former Helpers
Have Cliffhangers in the Works
And More Are in the Wings*

Crew

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Crying all the way to the bank.

FOR THEODORE C. SORENSEN, Cape Cod is a long, long way from Washington. Now there are brisk half-mile bike rides to a sandy beach, and a short scotch at sundown with Nantucket Sound on the horizon and a golf links in the middle distance.

There are six, perhaps eight, telephone calls a day: a travel agent, a magazine editor, a Supreme Court justice. Conversation is leisurely because the race is won.

Sorensen, special counsel to John F. Kennedy, finished first. His massive, 928-page "Kennedy" will be published by Harper & Row in October, the first of the heavyweights in a literary avalanche. Magazine excerpts have made the liveliest political reading this summer.

Look, with Sorensen ("a real insider"), and Life, with Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. ("an eminent Harvard historian"), began the tantalizing series of cliffhangers in July: Who said what that day in Los Angeles? Did JFK

really think the State Department was a bowl of jelly? Who was responsible for the Bay of Pigs?

The First Rumbblings

THE REACTION was immediate. Sen. Robert Kennedy felt obliged to grant an interview with the Associated Press reaffirming that there was "no disagreement" between himself and President Kennedy over the selection of Lyndon Johnson as vice presidential nominee. Maxwell Taylor privately expressed dismay that his confidential Bay of Pigs report found its way into a chapter of the Sorensen book.

Two weeks ago, Hubert Humphrey waded into the contretemps over Schlesinger's suggestion that President Kennedy planned to sack Dean Rusk after the 1964 elections. "I think it (the Schlesinger account) has been harmful," the Vice President said. "I think it has been mischievous."

These are only the first faint rumbblings. No fewer than nine former Kennedy aides have books in the works.

plied candidly: "Carefully." The urge not to offend leads Feldman to say: "I don't anticipate that too many people will be upset over my book. I'll be surprised if they are." Salinger, now a prosperous California businessman, is the most disarming of all: "My book is not a history or a biography of John F. Kennedy. It is more a story of Salinger."

Feedbox Stuff

THE BIOGRAPHER who knows the most about the administration and the mind of John Kennedy is probably Ted Sorensen. When he left the White House, he took ten large filing drawers full of personal papers. Alone among the biographers, he played a major role in the Cuban missile crisis.

For the Bay of Pigs chapter, he had available the confidential Taylor report; for a passage on the scrapping of the Skybolt missile, he drew on a copy of Richard Neustadt's specially commissioned (by JFK) study on what went wrong. He has copies of the unrevealed correspondence between Kennedy and Khrushchev, and officials

who have seen the book suspect that much of it appears minus quotation marks. Yet Sorensen concedes that there are important aspects of the missile crisis that cannot yet be told.

Like Schlesinger, Sorensen submitted drafts to Mrs. John F. Kennedy and the two Kennedy brothers. One Kennedy objected to the "stupid" quote that closes the Bay of Pigs chapter. ("How could I have been so stupid, to let them go ahead.") But Sorensen disagreed and left it in.

As each chapter was completed, Sorensen would send it off to an appropriate official in the Administration for comment. Sometimes the comments resulted in correction; more often not.

Schlesinger brings other gifts to the battle: a Pulitzer Prize in history; a close personal friendship with the President and his wife (Schlesinger vigorously denies suggestions that he used his interview with Mrs. Kennedy for the Kennedy Library's oral history project as source material for "One Thousand Days"); thorough knowledge of Kennedy's Latin-American policy; intimacy with the liberal wing of the Democratic Party.

A Knowledgeable Crew

POLITICAL BUFFS will ransack the Sorensen and Schlesinger books for the real inside story of the Kennedy years, but the buffs may be looking at the wrong book. The sleeper revelation could well be the O'Brien-O'Donnell-Powers collaboration—if it ever gets written. The three know every facet of the President's political career.

O'Brien has a file full of memoranda from lawyer-troubleshooter Clark Clifford written during the Ike-Kennedy transition in 1960. Powers has more anecdotes than Aesop and (in Salinger's opinion) O'Donnell was closer, personally, to the President than any of the other biographers. The three knew the full story of the selection of LBJ as Vice President. But will the story be told?

O'Brien calls it "unsensational." O'Donnell disagrees. Both insist that Arthur Schlesinger misinterpreted events.

Like the tribe that lost its head, it is perhaps inevitable that the old Kennedy gang should fall to bickering. It is particularly ironic in the case of O'Brien, O'Donnell and Powers.

O'Donnell, now pursuing a political career in Massachusetts, and O'Brien, the newest Cabinet member, have traveled different roads since the assassination. O'Donnell has never fully understood why O'Brien stayed on under Mr. Johnson. The pulling and hauling of Boston politics tended to exacerbate matters.

It seems that even the collaborators can't agree on an assessment. "You can't expect me to be objective; I loved the guy!" O'Donnell says. "They are building Jack Kennedy into a legend 10 feet tall," said O'Brien. "No one will recognize either the pedestal or the man when they get through."

Across town, Dave Powers remarked thoughtfully: "The first time I walked into President Kennedy's office, he looked 10 feet tall. And, you know, each day he looked a little taller."



"Then he says to me, 'I'm gonna dump Schlesinger right after the '64 election.'"