

DREW PEARSON

Bobby, LBJ Feud Spans Eight Years

WASHINGTON — When Sen. Robert F. Kennedy was a small boy, his father drilled into him and his brothers the idea that one of them was to become president of the United States. Old Joe Kennedy was a persistent papa. He was schooled in the tradition that money could get you a long way in life, especially when coupled with Irish charm, and he was determined, as the son of Irish immigrants, that one of his boys should break the ban on a Catholic president.

His eldest son, Joseph P. Kennedy Jr., was killed during the war, flying off the coast of Portugal. But later Joe saw his second son, John F. Kennedy, attain this dream, only to see him shot down tragically in Dallas before the end of his first term.



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The night of the assassination, the Kennedy clan met in the White House until a very late hour planning how to get the White House back in the hands of a Kennedy.

It was then that a book was discussed telling the facts of the assassination. The book, "The Death of a President," by William Manchester, distorted many of the facts, especially the report that Lyndon Johnson had inveigled John F. Kennedy into going to Texas.

The facts were just the opposite. But the bitterness shown by Bobby and the refusal of Jackie ever to set foot in the White House while the Johnsons occupy it have given wide circulation to this myth, and many Europeans still believe that the vice-president helped plot President Kennedy's death.

Obviously this led to the deepening of the bitterness between Bobby Kennedy and the man he would like to replace.

ACTUALLY, the Bobby-LBJ feud had begun long before John F. Kennedy's assassination. Probably it began on that fateful day in Los Angeles when the Democratic convention nominated JFK for

President and when Kennedy, a practical politician, selected Johnson for his running mate against the advice of his brother.

The job of vice-president is always difficult, since the vice-president has little to do. Presiding over the Senate is a formality usually allocated to freshman senators, and no vice-president enjoys it for more than a few minutes a day. Therefore, Lyndon Johnson, restless and dynamic former Senate majority leader, was most unhappy. And what contributed to his unhappiness was a series of newspaper articles which everyone in Washington suspected came from Bobby Kennedy telling how Lyndon was a fifth wheel. The Kennedys, it was reported, considered him a Texas clown.

The public knew little about this bitterness but those inside the administration did. And efforts were made to do something about it.

Averell Harriman, a good friend of Bobby Kennedy's, talked to him. And in the Justice Department Ramsey Clark, who had grown up in a Texas family which Lyndon Johnson frequently visited, urged his boss, Attorney General Kennedy, to invite the vice-president over to the Justice Department for an occasional staff luncheon. The attorney general did not take the hint.

President Johnson, trying to get Bobby's mind off the death of his brother, sent him to Indonesia to negotiate a cease-fire with Malaysia, where he did a good job. Johnson also kept Bobby on as attorney general, despite reports — probably erroneous — that Bobby had dredged up the Bobby Baker case to embarrass Johnson and was tapping the wires of Baker's friend, Fred Black, in the Sheraton-Carlton Hotel, also to embarrass the President.

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THE RECENT conference called by Gov. Nelson Rockefeller in his Fifth Ave. apartment for advice on who he should run for pre was attended by top both past and present Republican party.

The guest list: Meade Alcorn
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