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Kennedy Funeral 540, 2 takes total 860

By JERRY BUCK

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NEW YORK AP - In the fading light of the rolling Virginia countryside seven men gathered on the terrace at Hickory Hill last Wednesday night and prepared for the death of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy.

All had been frequent guests at the Kennedy home in happier times. But now they knew, though the public had not been told, that there was little hope for the life of the senator. A telephone call from Dave Hackett, one of Robert Kennedy's closest friends, had informed them of the seriousness of the wound.

They asked the questions that would have to be asked when Kennedy died in Los Angeles of an assassin's bullet and set into motion the massive preparations for the funeral and burial.

Seated by the pool, where they had all splashed on another day, were John Nolan and Louis Oberdorfer, Washington lawyers; George Stevens Jr.; the Rev. Richard McSorley, a teacher at Georgetown University; John Glenn, the former astronaut; Joseph P. Gargan, the senator's cousin, and Joe Dolan, the senator's administrative assistant.

Glenn took notes and drew up an unofficial outline of what would have to be done.

Later, as the life ebbed from Robert Kennedy in Los Angeles' Good Samaritan Hospital, Nolan and Oberdorfer remained at Hickory Hill after the others had left and went over Glenn's notes. They had the final draft typed out and dictated by telephone to Los Angeles. There the ideas were studied by the Kennedy group and a memo was dictated back.

One of the first questions that had come up was: Could Kennedy be buried at Arlington National Cemetery near the body of his brother, President John F. Kennedy? The man who had selected that site nearly five years ago was Robert S. McNamara, then secretary of defense and now president of the World Bank.

Nolan got on the telephone and traced McNamara to Frankfurt, Germany. McNamara assured him that Kennedy could be buried in Arlington, and within a short time boarded an airplane to return to the United States.

On the West Coast, within an hour after Sen. Kennedy's death, another group of men, numbed by grief and fatigue, huddled on the fifth floor of the Good Samaritan Hospital.

"We all had ideas," Frank Mankiewicz told the New York Post in an interview. "It was not as if he'd been shot five minutes before."

In that group were Stephen Smith, Kennedy's brother-in-law; John Seigenthaler, editor of the Nashville Tennessean and former Justice Department aide; Pierre Salinger, former press secretary to President Kennedy; Fred Dutton, former White House aide, and Mankiewicz.

Later, Sen. Edward Kennedy arrived with a blueprint for the funeral. The plans were at the direction of the widow, Ethel Skakel Kennedy, who accompanied her brother-in-law.

"The funeral will be in New York," Kennedy said. "We will bury my brother at Arlington, near Jack."

Mrs. Kennedy wanted the funeral to be in New York because her husband had represented that state and so that there would be no comparisons with the funeral of President Kennedy.

Asked how the body would be taken to Washington, Edward Kennedy said: "By train. We will go by train."

The idea of transporting the body and the funeral guests by train was a particularly appealing idea and one that had great symbolism in the minds of the Kennedy family and friends. In a nostalgic and anachronistic change of pace, Robert Kennedy had whistle-stopped across Indiana, Nebraska, Oregon and California.

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Thursday morning, the men who had met at Hickory Hill the night before gathered again, this time in the dining room. They were joined by Nicholas Katzenbach, the undersecretary of state and Kennedy's former deputy attorney general, and Thomas Powers, a Washington lawyer and friend of the Kennedys. They studied the plans made in Los Angeles, and later in the day they flew to New York to receive the body returning on an Air Force jet provided by President Johnson.

The Kennedy family, friends and associates from the campaign and from Washington met at Steve Smith's offices at 200 Park Ave.

It started at about 11 p.m. with everybody—about 25 people in all—gathered in Smith's office to discuss the written agenda. The room was not made for conferences and in the two-hour session they sat informally about on chairs and the sofa and on the floor. By then McNamara had arrived from Frankfurt.

By far the most difficult and ticklish part of the operation was deciding who to invite and how to get the invitation to them on such short notice.

A "list of lists" was drawn up—at least 10,000 names altogether—and over and over again it was pruned until slightly more than 2,000 remained.

The cathedral holds about 2,100 and the group took a calculated risk by inviting more than it could hold. They figured not everybody invited could or would be able to attend.

William Hartigan, who had headed transportation in the Kennedy presidential campaign of 1960, took charge of arranging for the transportation.

A Penn-Central Railroad spokesman estimated that the train cost "approximately \$20,000." The over-all cost of the funeral was estimated by the New York Post at under \$50,000. It noted that many things were donated.

The ceremony at the graveside was put into the hands of George Stevens Jr. and William Walton, chairman of the District of Columbia Commission on the Arts.

Bill D. Moyers, publisher of "Newsday" and former White House aide to President Johnson, volunteered his services and handled press arrangements in Washington.

There wasn't time to print invitations to the funeral so it was decided to send each invitee a telegram and then follow it up with a telephone call.

Edward Kennedy personally telephoned President Johnson with his invitation.

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