



Senator John F. Kennedy and Vice President Nixon debating on TV in 1960

Nixon-Kennedy 'Great Debate' Gave a Contrast in Appearance

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 22—On Sept. 26, 1960, Richard M. Nixon and Senator John F. Kennedy met in a stark CBS television studio in Chicago for history's first nationally televised debate between Presidential candidates.

They arrived an hour early, at 7:30 P.M., but the 47-year-old Mr. Nixon, then the Republican Vice President, banged a previously infected knee on a car door in the studio garage. He was tired, too, and clearly not at his best.

Mr. Kennedy, his Democratic opponent, was four years younger and was relaxed, rested and well briefed.

It was not exactly the "great debate" predicted in its billing, but something closer to a panel show, with four newsmen, their backs to the camera, asking questions and the candidates responding.

A Courteous Encounter

The candidates drew slips of paper from a briefcase to determine their positions and the order in which they would speak. Mr. Kennedy's slip put him on the right side of the moderator, Howard K. Smith, and allowed him to speak first and last.

He put Mr. Nixon on the defensive at the outset with grim exhortations of Nikita Khrushchev, the Soviet Prime Minister,

although the debate was ostensibly limited to domestic issues.

There were a few clashes on spending, farms and social issues, but the encounter was for the most part genteel, earnest and courteous.

Mr. Nixon had ruled out professional makeup, along with a prepared text or notes, but he endured a hasty, last-minute application of a cosmetic designed to tone his unshaven face. Mr. Kennedy was dabbed lightly with makeup.

Alert but Relaxed

Mr. Kennedy appeared somber but composed, alert but relaxed, with one leg crossed over the other.

Mr. Nixon, his face chalky and gaunt, seemed restless, clearly under strain. His feet shuffled under his chair, his hands fidgeted, his eyes darted about, his lips, glistening with perspiration, either pursed or erupted into what appeared to be a smile he did not feel.

When it was over, Mr. Nixon joked that the debate "gave the American people a chance to see something besides *Dobie Gillis*," a reference to a television situation comedy. Much later he wrote from San Clemente, Calif., that he thought Mr. Kennedy had "gained more" from the debates than he.