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Memories of JFK



WASHINGTON — Four years have passed since John F. Kennedy was felled in the autumn sunshine of Dallas.

Life has moved on. A magnificent permanent memorial has been erected over the late President's grave in Arlington Cemetery. Yet another unknown professor has challenged the Warren Commission report with yet another flimsy thesis as to how he might have been killed. His widow and brother have squabbled violently with their publishers over a book meant to add to the Kennedy glory but thought by many to be full of unkind truths about living persons.

JOHN KENNEDY'S White House successor has just rescued from a penny-pinching Congress, for something like the eighth time; the anti-poverty program which Kennedy conceived but was waiting to articulate in his second term campaign.

The Soviets have emotionally professed their abiding love for his memory, ignoring the fact that they defied him with the Berlin Wall and brought him to the brink of world war with their Cuban missiles.

Richard Nixon, that other major figure in the 1960 campaign drama, is preparing to go through it all again in a second quest for the job.

John Kennedy's brother, Robert, is hinting he may not support President Johnson for re-election, even though Johnson has carried through all the unfinished Kennedy programs and still retains half of the Kennedy cabinet. Robert is consider-

ing supporting instead Sen. Eugene McCarthy, who now favors peace without victory in an Asian war to which the U.S. was committed by John Kennedy.

And so life has moved on. The precise memory of the young President that was left to the few who knew him and the millions who were touched by his leadership has long been blurred by the misty legends spun by men who wanted to sell books, or hand-painted souvenir plates, or run for office in his name.

Only a few individuals have fought to keep the Kennedy story in perspective. Most notable among them is Postmaster-General Lawrence O'Brien, a member of the old "Irish Mafia," who pleaded not long ago for the nation to remember President Kennedy not as a fairy prince (which he wasn't) but as a working politician with a good record of political accomplishment (which he was).

President Johnson has achieved more in terms of solid progress at home and abroad in his four years than President Kennedy did in his three years. But Kennedy endowed the country with an intangible and invaluable legacy of dignity, of youthful courage and revived spirit.

COMPARISONS BETWEEN the two are both inevitable and unfair—one is a living person, a target for other men's anger and ambitions; the other is a non-competitive memory. And they were so different.

Kennedy's presence no longer dominates the capital, but he is not forgotten.