

Kennedy's

Short, Intense Life

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Robert Francis Kennedy, 42 at his death, was the controversial Kennedy. He was the second member of his family in a decade to run for the Presidency, the second to die at an assassin's hand.

His public career spanned sixteen years, from campaign manager for his brother's successful run against Henry Cabot Lodge for the U.S. Senate in 1952 to his own race for the Presidency in 1968.

He was born in Boston, Mass., November 20, 1925, the seventh of nine children and third son of Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy and Rose Kennedy.

The eldest brother, Joseph P. Jr., was killed in an air crash in World War II, the second eldest, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated by Lee Harvey Oswald in 1963.

Only Edward M. Kennedy, senior Senator from Massachusetts, now survives among the sons.

HARVARD

Like all the Kennedy men, Robert Kennedy was educated at Harvard. He was graduated in 1948, and went on to the University of Virginia Law School at Charlottesville, from which he was graduated in 1951.

On June 17, 1950, he married Ethel Skakel, the daughter of an industrialist from Greenwich, Conn.

Mrs. Ethel Kennedy expects her eleventh child in December. Ten children survive.

Senator Kennedy entered public life in 1951, as a lawyer in the criminal division of the Justice Department. He became assistant counsel of the Hoover Commission on governmental reorganization in 1953, but quickly moved on to become assistant counsel of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations

of the Senate, better known as the McCarthy Committee for its chairman the late Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin.

FEUD

Kennedy served under lawyer Roy Cohn in the heyday of the committee. He and Cohn clashed almost from the beginning, and in 1955, after Cohn's — and McCarthy's — departure, Kennedy got the top job as chief counsel under the new Democratic chairman, John L. McClellan (Ark.).

"Mr. Kennedy often didn't like Mr. Cohn's methods and said so — to Mr. Cohn and others," wrote a reporter at the time. "The two feuded bitterly behind subcommittee scenes."

Kennedy's years with the Senate investigations subcommittee included the time

of the turbulent open hearings between McCarthy and the U.S. Army.

Later the committee became known as the Senate "Rackets Committee" and Kennedy came face to face with Dave Beck, boss of the Teamsters union, and Beck's successor, James R. Hoffa.

Robert Kennedy's fight with Hoffa began in those days and was to continue through the 1960s, when the Federal Government finally made a charge of jury tampering stick.

HOFFA

It was during his relentless pursuit of Hoffa that Kennedy was to be called "ruthless." The charge would stick, too, despite persistent attempts to shake it; Robert Kennedy became the bad Kennedy, who to critics was self-righteous and implacable in combat with enemies.

Those who knew Kennedy well would insist that his moral fervor came not from self-righteousness but from deep compassion. Those who were his friends said that far from being tough, he was a romantic; they would say that his excesses resulted from a deep idealism to remake an imperfect world.

His favorite quotation on the campaign trail was from George Bernard Shaw: "Some men dream the dream that was and ask 'why?' I dream the dream that never was and ask, 'why not?'"

CAMPAIGN

In 1960, Kennedy became official campaign manager for his brother.

When his brother won the presidency, he named Robert to be Attorney General — at 35 one of the youngest ever. There was criticism then, as there would be later, but the President shrugged it off. "Bobby," he said jokingly, "needed a little legal experience."

As chief legal officer for the Government, Kennedy gathered some of the most

impressive talent in the Nation to run bureaus in the department — Nicholas Katzenbach, Burke Marshall, and John Doar, to name only three primarily associated with civil rights.

It was the White House and Kennedy's Justice Department which, by executive action, began to support the youthful "Freedom Riders" and demonstrators who instituted the civil rights demonstrations in the South.

RESTRAINT

But increasingly in his brother's Administration, Kennedy began to concern himself with foreign affairs. According to the testimony of former Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara, Kennedy's was the principal voice for restraint in the Cuban missile crisis of October, 1962.

Together with McNamara and other military advisers, Kennedy developed the theory of counter-insurgency whereby the United States could contain wars of national liberation. It was on the basis of counter-insurgency that the Administration — his brother the President as well as virtually every senior official — thought that the war in Vietnam could be won.

When John F. Kennedy was assassinated Nov. 22, 1963, Robert Kennedy was devastated. He volunteered to President Johnson to resign his post as Attorney General and go to Saigon as

Ambassador. The President refused, and refused again to consider him as a running mate.

The President and Robert Kennedy had never been

close, and in the months following John Kennedy's death the chill grew deeper. It was a result of different generations, different temperaments, different political styles — and similar ambitions.

SENATE

In 1964, Kennedy formally moved to New York and sought the Democratic nomination for Senator. He won it, and went on to easily defeat incumbent Republican Kenneth B. Keating.

The decisive escalation of the war occurred in March, 1965, with the dispatch of combat troops to South Vietnam. If Robert Kennedy's dissent from the Johnson Administration's conduct of the war can be fixed, it is probably at that point; for at that

point, the war became, perforce, an American war.

By mid-1965, Kennedy was clearly disillusioned with the course of that and other events in America. He spoke out in statements and in speeches on the Senate floor. He became a spokesman for the dissenters in America, from white middle-class college students to poor Negroes and American Indians.

His hair grew long and appearances at colleges and universities were enough to cause near-riots. The youth of America, attracted by him as well as fascinated by the tragedy of the family, was his. It was Kennedy's absolutely until the eruption on the scene of Eugene J. McCarthy, the Minnesota Democrat, in December, 1967.

Slowly at first then with gathering force, McCarthy began to attract the young. He did it principally through force of character, and his oft-repeated claim to be the man with the courage to stand up to an unpopular administration. McCarthy had bitten the bullet, and Kennedy had not.

Kennedy, meanwhile, stonewalled. His own instincts, it is now understood, were to take the plunge and fight President Johnson for the nomination, but most of his senior advisers, his brother Edward and Theodore C. Sorensen, to name two, advised against it. He hung back, knowing that he was damned if he did and damned if he didn't.

The claim was later made that if Kennedy had gone in



Senator Robert F. Kennedy was shown (at far right) with his wife Ethel (next to him) and nine of his ten children in this picture taken in May

the American people would have thought the motivation was personal pique at Mr. Johnson, not a profoundly differing vision of America and the policy of the Administration. In any event Kennedy, with everything to lose by premature announcement, said nothing, did not support McCarthy, hung back and watched the support of the young — and the intellectuals — drift to the Senator from Minnesota.

PRESIDENCY

He entered the race for the Presidency four days after the New Hampshire primary election, in which Senator Eugene J. McCarthy narrowly missed defeating Mr. Johnson. Kennedy carried his fight through five primaries, winning all but Oregon.

Kennedy's campaign was haunted by memories of his brother. Every phrase, every gesture, was reminiscent of the late President. The campaign staff was divided into two groups, the old war-horses of 1960 — Sorenson, Lawrence O'Brien, Kenneth O'Donnell, Pierre Salinger, Fred Dutton — and the new men — Adam Walinsky, Peter Edelman, Joseph Dolan, Frank Manciewicz.

"He is, after all, his brother's brother," they said when the opposition taunted him for trying to capitalize on Jack Kennedy's martyred memory. But after the Indiana primary, Robert Kennedy began to find his own style. It was a style which could recite, unselfconsciously, one of Albert Camus's most touching lines, to the effect that there are tortured children in the world; the only good a man can do is to help stop the torturing of children.

At Creighton University in Omaha he took on a white,

middle class college audience which favored student draft deferments and an Army—to judge by the questions — drafted from the ghetto. He shamed them into a red-faced silence with an eloquent plea for equality in the face of death.

He thought that it was "unacceptable" for the Vietnam war, much as he hated it, to be fought by poor black and white boys — while the rich boys stayed at college, well out of it.

OREGON

When defeat came finally to the Kennedys (in Oregon), the first in twenty-six straight elections, Robert Kennedy took it without tears.

"I got my face kicked in," he told one reporter.

He resolved to go on to California, and if defeat came there as well — apparently was resigned to losing his first lunge at the Presidency.

Haunted by the almost unbelievable series of tragedies which have struck his family, Robert Kennedy was said to be a fatalist.

Asked often in 1964 and 1965 and 1966 and 1967 whether and when he would run for the Presidency, he would reply that men could never chart events; events happened, and sometime they worked out and sometimes they did not. The future could not be foretold.

The family had attracted violent death as a magnet attracts filings. So he, Robert Kennedy, shot the treacherous Rogue River in Oregon, and climbed Mt. Kennedy. He sailed in squalls, swam far out beyond the shore in the Pacific Ocean. If America had been a country where bullfighting, instead of football, had been the national sport, Kennedy would have tried that.