

TV Coverage

A Long Day Seen With an Intimate Eye

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Associated Press

NEW YORK — (AP) — The day that Sen. Robert Kennedy died became, through the intimacy of television, a long period of emotion, introspection and grief for millions of people.

From the moment early yesterday that press secretary Frank Mankiewicz, in a voice muted and tight with strain, announced that the 42 year old presidential aspirant had succumbed to an assassin's bullet, the television networks carried the story in detail into countless American homes.

And again, they performed magnificently, efficiently and — above all — with taste and respect for the bereavement of the Kennedy family.

PROGRAMS CANCELLED

NBC abandoned regular programming for the entire day and concentrated on the Kennedy tragedy. CBS and ABC returned to regular programming for some periods but were on deck for all the important, visual aspects of the period.

There was so much to be seen — so many faces, so much analysis and second-guessing, so many reminiscences, so many tributes — over the long hours that by the time the casket was carried into St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York and the great bronze doors closed, it actually seemed a relief.

But some of the sights and sounds will stand out in memory for a long time:

- The hearse-led motorcade carrying the Kennedy group from the hospital to the Air Force jet at Los Angeles, followed all the way by TV camera-equipped helicopters.
- Members of the Kennedy family joining hands around the casket on the lift that carried them up to the forward hatch of the plane.
- The stoic composure of Ethel Kennedy who, surrounded by friends, nevertheless seemed to be alone.
- The quiet, tractable crowds in both Los Angeles and New York.
- David Brinkley closing his broadcast as the plane took off by saying with concealed anger, "There they go . . . Three widows of men murdered by political assassins," referring to Mrs. Robert Kennedy, Mrs. John F. Kennedy and Mrs. Martin Luther King Jr, all on the plane.

During the hour before the arrival of the plane in New York, Washington correspondent Ray Scherer sat with three other close friends of the Kennedys for a warm and intimate talk about the New York senator, his wife and their way of life. They were comedian Jack Paar, columnist Art Buchwald and most interesting of all, Rene Carpenter, wife of former astronaut Scott Carpenter.

FRIENDS REMINISCE

They told anecdotes. They combined to explain the difference between the public Robert Kennedy and the private one, and they did it better than has been done before. They told of the fine relationship between the man and his wife.

There will be special coverage of St. Patrick's Cathedral today as Kennedy lies there, and on Saturday the three networks will devote practically the entire day to the funeral services in New York and the cortege and burial in Washington.