

RFK Friends Feared What Happened

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LOS ANGELES — Among those who left here to take Bobby Kennedy home from the campaign trails yesterday, some had double heavy hearts.

They were understandably sad at the loss of their friend, their candidate and "the Boss," as they took off in the gleaming presidential jet in the bright Southern California sun.

But some of the mourners—like former press secretary for President John F. Kennedy, Pierre Salinger — had another reason. They had been afraid that just what had happened would happen.

They had talked to Sen. Kennedy about their concern. They had suggested that his free-and-easy campaign style be tempered with additional security considerations.

Bobby listened, but he said no. "You've got to campaign among the people," he said.

SECURITY

Bobby Kennedy attracted huge crowds; this was a political plus. But — at his own direction — he discouraged the use of police or suggestions that he use a rear entrance to avoid the crushing body-contact with the crowds. This was a tragic security minus.

"I'll go out the front way," he said on many occasions.

He loved the crowd and was pleasantly aware that most of the crowd loved him. He refused to take precautions against the few among the many who did not.

Whether a different attitude might have prevented the young assassin from mortally wounding him a few moments after his California primary victory was assured is not known.

Nor could it make any difference as the slain senator's body, in a casket covered by a maroon blanket, was lifted to the front door of the plane his old political foe, President Lyndon B. Johnson, had sent to take him home.

FAMILY

With the body on the mechanical lift stood his brother and Senate colleague, Teddy; his widow, Ethel — stricken with grief at her loss and anxiety over the expectation of their unborn eleventh child; and other kin and

friends who were closest to him in life.

Thousands of persons who jammed the austere charter plane facility on the western edge of Los Angeles International Airport stood silently while the mechanics of death took place.

Some held American flags aloft. Some had sent flowers which crowded the interior of the blue, white and silver jet that bore "United States of America" on her side and the Stars and Stripes on her tail.

She bore the designation: "Air Force 2." Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy, who also was robbed of her husband by an assassin's bullet, entered the plane at the rear steps.

A red carpet, bordered by red and white flowers stretched outward for the 70 close friends and associates who boarded to accompany the dead senator on the final flight from a campaign he hoped and believed would lead him to the White House his brother once occupied.

HOURS EARLY

Thousands who crowded around the small and austere West Imperial Terminal of the airport had gathered hours before the blue and black hearse bearing Senator Kennedy's body had even left Good Samaritan Hospital where he died.

As the four jet engines of the huge plane began to scream into action, the sense of departure came home to thousands standing by.

Some teen-age girls and adult women began to cry — a Negro wearing the uniform of a U.S. Navy lieutenant, jg,

stood at attention in the midst of a crowd of civilians. When the plane began to move, his arm snapped to a rigid salute. His face was expressionless; his eyes were moist.

The plane taxied out to the takeoff runway.

Bobby Kennedy had fought for California and he had won it — the victory he knew he had to have to win the nation.

But now California and the nation had lost Bobby Kennedy. The plane screamed down the runway, rose and banked to the east.