

# JFK, RFK Visit Similarities Seen

By BILL LYNCH

(States-Item Bureau)

**BATON ROUGE** — There are striking parallels in the visits of the Kennedy brothers to Louisiana eight years apart, both focusing on a quest for the presidential nomination by the Democratic Party.

John F. Kennedy visited the Rice Festival at Crowley in 1959 a few months before he made his public announcement for the presidential nomination.

Sen. Robert F. Kennedy will visit Louisiana April 5-6, in his brother's footsteps.

Sen. Kennedy will be the guest of City Judge Edmund Reggie of Crowley, just as Jack Kennedy was in 1959 when he looked into a crowd of 127,000 South Louisianians at the Rice Festival.



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Reggie believes that Sen. Kennedy is coming to Louisiana a better known figure and with more popularity among the people than did John Kennedy when he first came.

Reggie was a cochairman of the Kennedy campaign in Louisiana in 1960 and is now a leading supporter of Robert Kennedy in his delayed bid for the nomination.

**AT THIS STAGE**, Bobby is stronger," Reggie said. "I am only judging from the reaction of his impending visit. Jack was not as well known then as Bobby is today."

He said the big issues facing John Kennedy in 1959 when he came to the Catholic — French South Louisiana country were his age and religion.

"Bobby (at 42) doesn't have to prove his age and that he is American enough," Reggie continued. "Those two issues have to, a large extent, subsided."

Whatever strength Sen. Kennedy might have in Louisiana is predominantly in the South, Reggie feels that North Louisiana still remains the same obstacle to Robert as it did to John.

"There are some people who are saying 'I waited too long to appreciate Jack Kennedy, I'm not going to wait that long to be for Bobby Kennedy,'" Reggie said. "Consequently we have more people waiting to work for him."

**HE SAID**, "we also find there are some people who are for Bobby Kennedy because there is a great deal of sentimentalism for the late president."

"Bobby strikes a responsive chord because people are disenchanted with President Johnson."

The latter statement might be more wishful thinking than a realistic appraisal.

Both John Kennedy and Robert were facing the hur-

dle of winning the nomination from the Democratic Party. At the time of his visit to Crowley in 1959, however, John was further along the road toward his goal and people were aware he was in the race.

When Robert Kennedy comes to Crowley, his bid for the nomination will be much more difficult — facing an incumbent President and with a later start.

**REGGIE FIRST** became acquainted with the brothers Kennedy at the 1956 Democratic convention in Chicago when the Louisiana and Massachusetts delegations were seated across the aisle from each other. Reggie had relatives he visited and became aware of the support for John Kennedy for the vice-presidential bid that year.

"Camille Gravel (who was to become Democratic National Commitman from Louisiana) and I thought he was a very attractive candidate," Reggie commented.

They met Robert first and told him they would like to help John as much as possible.

"We had been bound to Frank Clement of Tennessee for vice - president," Reggie said. "When it became apparent that Clement couldn't make it he released us and we went right on to Kennedy."

Reggie said, "Uncle Earl (the late Gov. Earl Long) wanted Sen. Estes Kefauver and we played it a little touch and go for awhile. The delegates wanted Kennedy and voted under the unit rule and we went for him."

**KENNEDY LOST** to Kefauver, but on the way out of the arena he remarked to Reggie and Gravel "I'll be in touch with you again."

Later in 1956, Kennedy campaigned for Adlai Stevenson in New Orleans and Opelousas. He and Reggie stayed in close touch and in 1959 Reggie visited Kennedy at his home in Georgetown and invited him to the Rice Festival.

"He said what's that and I said we'll have 50,000 people there," Reggie said. "He asked me how many people in Crowley and I said about 15,000. It became a joke with us because they really didn't expect even 15,000."

"There were 127,000 people — a sea of humanity around the courthouse. People knew he was running — although it was two months before he announced."

"He looked at that sea of

people and the band was playing 'Dixie,' and I'll never forget what he said. He said, 'My God, the South has Risen Again.'"

**NEARLY EVERY** candidate for governor, including Gov. Jimmie Davis, visited with Kennedy at Reggie's home. Gov. McKeithen has been invited to visit with Robert but has not accepted.

Sen. Kennedy two years ago cancelled a visit to speak at the AFL-CIO Convention in New Orleans because high ranking politicians, including Rep. Hale Boggs and Gov. McKeithen, would not be on the same platform with him.

Mrs. John F. Kennedy also appeared at the Rice Festival and when she spoke in French, the response from the audience was overwhelming, Reggie said. There are no plans for Ethel Kennedy, Robert's wife, to make the visit although they may change.

Louisiana did not support Kennedy at the national convention in Los Angeles in 1960 and is not expected to support Robert in Chicago in 1968.

The delegates probably will support Lyndon Johnson.

**REGGIE SAID HE** made an effort to swing the Louisiana delegates to Kennedy through Gov. Jimmie H. Davis.

"I tried to get Gov. Davis to go with us," Reggie said. "He was the key man. But Gov. Davis chose not to support him. They met at my home and had a nice meeting and I had the feeling he would have gone along."

"But in between the first and second primaries (when Davis faced the late Chep Morrison in a runoff) there was a widespread rumor that Kennedy had asked the AFL-COPE (political action group) if they could assist Morrison."

"Davis believed that was done, although the help did not materialize," Reggie said.

Davis later worked in the Democratic Central Committee in a vain effort to give the coveted rooster emblem of the state party to an unpledged elector slate, denying it to Kennedy.

At the national convention in Los Angeles in 1960 the delegation would not answer telephone calls from Robert Kennedy, Reggie recalled.

Reggie worked with Federal Judge Frank B. Ellis as campaign leaders statewide and Gov. McKeithen, who was still a public service commissioner, coordinated efforts in North Louisiana for Kennedy.

Although McKeithen has not been a supporter of Kennedy, particularly on the

Vietnam issue, Reggie believes that McKeithen will be reasonable about any suggestions that might be proposed.

Reggie, also a close supporter of McKeithen, has been trying to bring Robert Kennedy and the governor together as a running team.

**HOWEVER**, THE governor, sensing the political winds in the state, has steered shy of any coalition with the New York senator. The popularity of John Kennedy, who carried the state by a bare majority over the Republican and unpledged elector slates, declined somewhat after the racial turmoil in Mississippi and Alabama.

Reggie believes that has been erased by the assassination, but there still remains considerable animosity toward Sen. Kennedy.

The visit of Robert Kennedy will begin with a reception in New Orleans by the Young Democrats, a speech at Louisiana State University in New Orleans and a small private dinner by Reggie in the Crescent City. The party then will fly to Crowley Friday night and spend the night at Reggie's home.

Scores of newsmen will be brought in from out-of-state to report the visit.

Reggie arranged the occasion last October. "I wanted him to visit here because he has a sentimental attachment to this part of the state," Reggie said. "It has been good to him."

**THE 1960 VICTORY** was produced in South Louisiana and Reggie said he never had any doubts about the vote, even urging John Kennedy it would not be necessary to campaign here although he volunteered to do so.

It may not be necessary—in the face of delegate opposition—for Robert to campaign here, but perhaps Sen. Kennedy is looking beyond the convention to the election this year or in 1972.

## Tulane U. Gets \$33,800 Grant

Tulane University has been awarded a \$33,800 grant, the United States Office of Education announced yesterday, to conduct a short-term institute to train college teachers in the use of modern educational media such as teaching machines and computers.

Similar grants are being made to 40 other colleges and universities under Title VI-B of the Higher Education Act of 1965.

Faculty personnel who wish to attend the institute must apply directly to Tulane. Financial aid and stipends are available for this training.