

WASHINGTON.
WHEN Ramsey Clark, the new Attorney General of the United States, was a 17-year-old string bean, he was quiet, jug-eared, country-talking and slow-moving. Now, at 39, he is the youngest member of the President's Cabinet and the first son in our history to follow in his father's footsteps as Attorney General. He is still quiet, jug-eared, and despite the obvious fact that he has had to travel pretty fast to get where he is, he is nobody's image of a Young Man in a Hurry.

Seventeen-year-old Ramsey Clark gave no impression that he was going anywhere in a rush either at the end of his junior year at Washington's Woodrow Wilson High School in June,

FRED P. GRAHAM, a lawyer, regularly covers the Supreme Court and the Justice Department for The New York Times.

1945. He was a shy, deliberate youngster, always the last to collect his books and leave the classroom—a likable boy whom the other students took for granted (122 I.Q., 21st in a class of 117), who had never been elected to anything, and who shunned sports and read books.

Yet in the five and one-half years after that departure he: (1) earned his high-school diploma in summer school; (2) enlisted in the Marines and, after courier missions to the glamour capitals of Europe, came out as a corporal (a high rank among enlisted marines); (3) obtained a B.A. degree at the University of Texas; (4) married; (5) earned a master's degree in history at the University of Chicago, and (6) graduated with a doctor of jurisprudence degree from the University of Chicago Law School and began practice in the family law firm in Dallas.

Calculated at the usual pace of

three years for a Marine enlistment, four for college, two for the M.A., three for a law degree, and with the high-school diploma and marriage thrown in, he had ambled through the first dozen years of a typical young man's career in less than half the prescribed time.

THIS performance contained all the elements of the subsequent Clark pattern of making haste slowly. He was lucky—the postwar point system hastened his discharge. He was a plugger—summertime was always an opportunity to take more courses, and, while deliberate, he was unfailingly thorough. He was unassuming and pleasant—people wished him well. And he was well-connected. His father, Tom C. Clark, was Attorney General from 1945 to 1949, and thereafter an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court.

Because his family's longtime

friendship with Lyndon B. Johnson is so well-known, there has been a tendency to overestimate this final ingredient in the rapid rise of the young Attorney General. This is magnified, in a subtle way, by the fact that Mr. Johnson and many of the men around him come across as bigger than life-size. Such qualities as the computer mind of Robert S. McNamara, the eloquence of W. Willard Wirtz, the intellectual credentials of John W. Gardner and the facile intelligence of Nicholas deB. Katzenbach made these men standout personalities before Mr. Johnson obtained their services, and they appear even larger than life in the glare of Presidential publicity.

Ramsey Clark is much more like Bill D. Moyers, the able, soft-spoken former White House press secretary. Both are low-key types who made it fast and young because they were close enough to the President to have

Attorney General Clark may be more of a public defender than a prosecutor

Low-Key and Liberal

By FRED P. GRAHAM



COMER—Ramsey Clark testifies before a Senate hearing, left, on behalf of the Administration's antiwiretapping bill. Above, he ponders a legal point in his office with a bust of L. B. J. close by. On his office wall, right, hangs a portrait of his father, retiring Supreme Court Associate Justice Tom C. Clark, the only former Attorney General of the United States to have a son occupy the post.

New York Times photographs by GEORGE TAMES

their abilities noticed. They never developed oversized personalities, and both men seem to relish being just plain-Joe in the very big leagues.

Clark made it clear on the day he was appointed that he hopes to be a nonpolitical technician, rather than the partisan spokesman many Attorneys General have been. "My judgment is that the Department of Justice is not a good place to have high political activity," he told White House reporters. "The fact and appearance of its function have to be even-handed."

He also started out obviously determined to be more candid than most Washington leaders. He met the reporter's most sensitive questions head-on, commenting on such items as his relations with J. Edgar Hoover ("cordial," but future F.B.I. directors should be subject to Senate confirmation), and the death penalty (it should be abolished).

Young Ramsey Clark moves slowly, but he gets there fast—and in some surprising directions.

But immediately after his confirmation hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Clark was asked by reporters about the investigation of New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison into the assassination of President Kennedy, and his candor got him into his first hot water as Attorney General. Responding to questions about the arrest of Clay L. Shaw, a retired New Orleans businessman, for conspiring to murder the President, Clark—who has endorsed the Warren Commission's conclusion that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone—said the F.B.I. had checked out Shaw and found that he was not involved. But reporters failed to find evidence in the National Archives

that the F.B.I. had ever contacted Shaw, and reliable sources within the Government insisted that they had not. When the reporters returned to the Justice Department for clarification, they were told that Clark would not discuss the issue further.

If Clark was learning as early as his Senate confirmation day that he could no longer be as open as before, there were also indications at his swearing-in ceremony the following week that he would not be able to avoid politics completely. The hints came in connection with the current controversy over wiretapping and eavesdropping by law enforcement officials, a matter that is certain to be one of Clark's major concerns.

Numerous instances of illegal eavesdropping by the F.B.I. and other Federal agencies have come to light in the past year, and anyone in Clark's position would be expected to do something about the situation.

But when Clark became Acting Attorney General last October, the matter assumed peculiar political overtones. With characteristic openness, he announced that the Justice Department would review all cases in which illegal eavesdropping might have tainted evidence, and would inform the courts of any instances it found. So far, 14 have turned up—all having occurred during the tenures of Clark's predecessors, Katzenbach and Robert Kennedy.

In a speech at Clark's swearing-in, President Johnson departed from his text several times to stress his new Attorney General's role in safeguarding the citizenry from governmental snooping. Standing only a few feet from Senator Kennedy, his major rival within the Democratic party, the President lamented governmental invasions of privacy and promised that Clark would spearhead an effort to win Congressional approval of a ban on wiretapping and bugging in all but national-security investigations.

The political implications for Senator Kennedy were obvious—as Attorney General he had plugged for a law to permit court-supervised wiretapping by police, and he has been embroiled in a public quarrel with J. Edgar Hoover over who was responsible for the F.B.I. bugging that took place while he was Attorney General. So, although there is much to be said for court-approved police eavesdropping (a majority of President Johnson's own National Crime Commission feels that it is necessary to control crime), Robert Kennedy is identified with the "wrong" side of the issue.

Thus Clark's most sincere efforts to ventilate the issue have proved embarrassing to Senator Kennedy. The first time Clark testified in favor of the President's antiwiretapping bill in the House of Representatives, Republicans needed him with charges that Mr. Johnson was pushing the measure just to embarrass Senator Kennedy. Clark denied it, but after that his persuasive arguments against police eavesdropping seemed double-edged.

He may have had more luck keeping
(Continued on Page 134)



NY Times (Magazine)
April 21, 1967.