

They Line the Tracks to Say Good-by

Reprinted from yesterday's late editions.
By RUSSELL BAKER

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, June 8—Robert F. Kennedy's family brought him back to Washington for the last time today by train, and megalopolitan America lined the rails to say good-by.

The journey, slowed by accidents along the way and great crowds that often forced the train to slow almost to a stop, lasted from 1:02 P.M. to 9:08 P.M.—more than twice as long as had been expected.

Drawn by two black electric locomotives of the Penn Central Railroad, the funeral train traveled the 226 miles from New York through an almost unbroken succession of station throngs, urban street crowds and clusters of small-town mourners.

In the rural stretches separating the great Eastern cities, girls came to the railroad on horseback. Boys sat in the trees. In a desolate swampy section of New Jersey, a lone man knelt in prayer by the trackside. In the loneliest sections, family groups clustered around cars parked in the woods to hold up flags, to wave, or to salute.

It would be idle to guess at how many saw the train bearing the Senator's body. The train's route took it through the greatest concentrations of population on the continent, and in many places it seemed as if whole towns had turned out.

In many places the crowds ignored undermanned police lines and swarmed dangerously onto adjacent tracks to be closer to the train.

The train cortege has been part of the American legend since Walt Whitman immortalized Abraham Lincoln's funeral train back to Illinois in "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed."

There has probably been nothing quite like today's, however, since President Warren G. Harding was buried about 45 years ago.

Senator Kennedy's coffin rested on chairs at window level in the last of 21 cars. It was a private car with an old-fashioned observation platform on the rear end, and in the old tradition, was draped with black bunting.

From time to time as the train passed through large clusters of people, Mr. Kennedy's widow, Ethel, and his brother, Senator Edward M. Kennedy, appeared on the platform to acknowledge the salute of the crowds.

What they saw as they looked out was a picture of America pausing in its Saturday afternoon pastimes and wearing the casual dress that America wears on its day off. The majority of the women seemed to be in shorts or slacks. Thousands had their hair up in curlers, obviously preparing to look beautiful after sundown.

The men wore T-shirts or Bermudas, as if interrupted at their lawn work or the shopping. Because it was hot, many of the men stood bare-chested, though without neglecting to place hand over heart as the train glided by.

In many places Little League teams stood beside the tracks, sometimes saluting, other times with baseball caps held solemnly over their chests.

A Lone Bugler

At New Brunswick, N. J., a lone bugler on the station platform sounded taps at the passing train. Farther down, in a Philadelphia suburb, a brass marching band played an air that was impossible to identify from the rapidly moving train.

There were a few homemade signs. At Newark, four women on the platform wore cardboard placards around their necks. Each said "Farewell Robert."

At Linden, N. J., two tots, a boy and a girl in sunsuits, held a piece of hand-painted cardboard that said "Good-by Bobby."

"Good-by Bobby" seemed to be the favorite. It appeared perhaps two dozen times between Newark and Washington. Despite the Saturday afternoon informality of the crowds there was no lack of emotion.

In the big cities—Newark, Trenton, Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore—the train slowed to a funeral 10 miles an hour. Leaning out the doors, its passengers could hear women sobbing on the platforms and see girls struggling to hold back the tears.

At the North Philadelphia station, a woman cried over and over again, "Poor Bobby! Poor Bobby! Poor Bobby!"

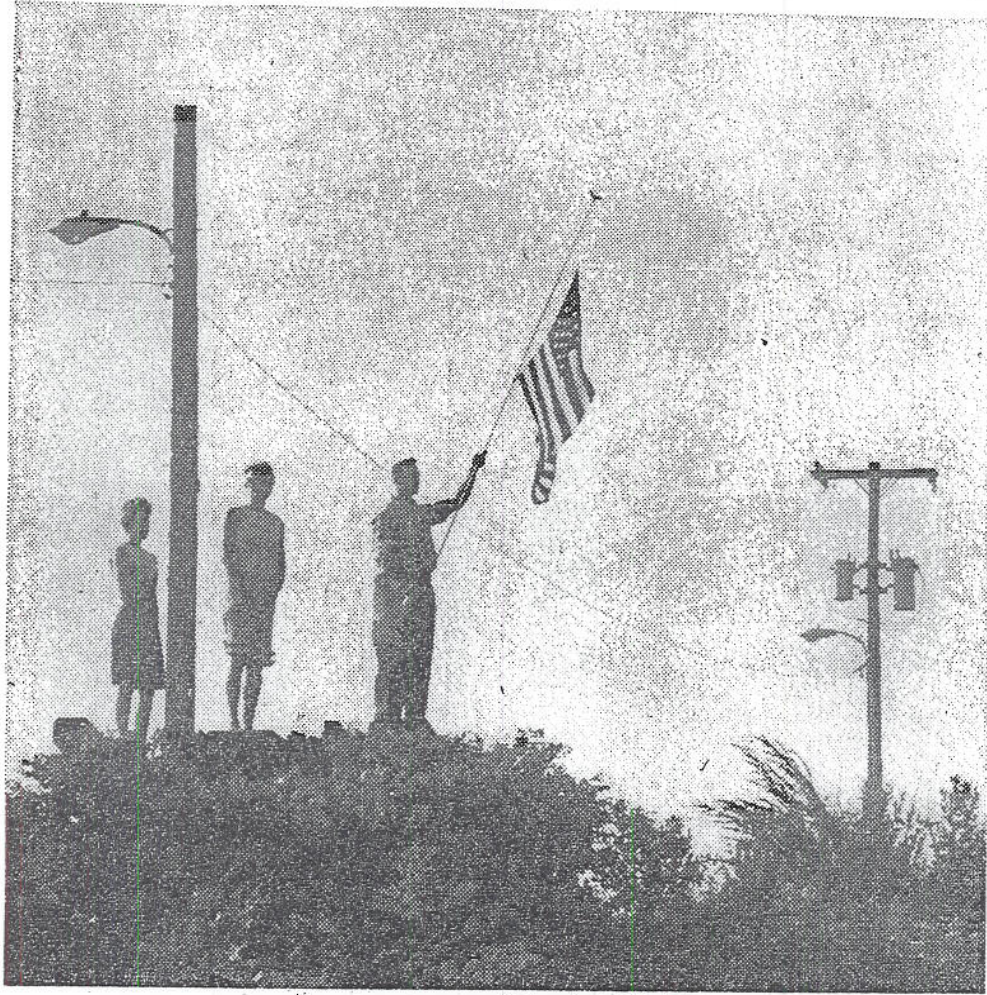
"We love you Bobby," said a piece of crudely hand-lettered canvas held by a man and a woman at Middle River, Md. The casual informality of the multitudes, the picture of America interrupted in the middle of its easygoing summer Saturday pastimes, seemed appropriate homage to a man who had never stood on form, but the odd thing was that so few brought flowers.

Here and there a girl held up a rose or a small bouquet of wildflowers to throw as the last car passed. But these were rare. Many brought flags and many, many more brought cameras. But virtually no one brought flowers.

"Americans have gotten too sophisticated for that," one member of the train party suggested. "We have come a long way from Lincoln."

In Maryland, of course, there were nature's offerings, wild roses pink along the tracks, and honeysuckle, but for the people it was not a day for flowers.

Mourners Along the Route to



Photographs for The New York Times by WILLIAM E. SAURO
A flag flying at half-staff was borne by one of thousands near North Philadelphia station who saw the train carrying body of Senator Robert F. Kennedy to Washington on Saturday.



Others watched the passage of the train in stoic silence. These men gestured with respect at station in Baltimore.

Washington Bid Farewell to Senator Kennedy



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The crowd that overflowed the platform at the Elizabeth, N. J., station as the funeral train, right, passed through, raced for safety when a northbound express suddenly appeared around a curve. The train, at center, killed two persons, a man and a woman, and injured five other spectators.

C.B.S.-TV



A couple in Baltimore. Photos were made on funeral train.



Many, like this group at the Elizabeth station, wept openly