

Kennedy Library Opens Most of Its Files

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WALTHAM, Mass., Aug. 1—The John F. Kennedy Presidential Library has opened virtually the entire official White House files—except for secret papers—spanning the years of the Kennedy Administration, from Jan. 20, 1961, to Nov. 22, 1963.

The step, announced today by John F. Stewart, the library's acting director, gives scholars and researchers access to some 3.3-million pages of hitherto unavailable documents at the Federal Records Center here, the temporary home of the Kennedy archives.

The documents, technically known as the White House Central Subjects and Names

Files, range from original Presidential letters and drafts of momentous announcements on Cuba and Vietnam to mountains or routine correspondence. They do not include President Kennedy's personal papers or documents "previously classified for reasons of national security," which are kept in the center's vault.

A reading of about half of the 1,010 boxes of White House files—each containing about 1,000 pages—and of the oral history transcripts, uncovered the following:

¶The Kennedy Administration made a pervasive effort in correspondence with members of Congress and concerned citizens to minimize its growing involvement in Vietnam. A deliberately vague press communi-

qué on the subject written by Pierre Salinger after a Cabinet-level review of the Vietnam situation in Honolulu in November, 1963, displayed a marginal note in the handwriting of McGeorge Bundy, an adviser to Mr. Kennedy: "Pierre: Champion! Excellent Prose. No Surprise. 'A communiqué should say nothing in such a way as to fool the press without deceiving them.'"

¶A week after the defeat of the Cuban exile force at the Bays of Pigs, President Kennedy diplomatically rejected a private suggestion by Senator Barry Goldwater "to make the decision to invade Cuba to rid

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"The Tortured Americans." People just like you. See today's book page.

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the hemisphere of the threat of extended Communism."

¶The President's dissatisfaction with the performance of the State Department early in his Administration is underscored in a series of White House memoranda, among them a note from Mr. Kennedy to Secretary of State Dean Rusk demanding that he retire those career Foreign Service officers "who did not meet a high standard."

¶An oral-history tape by a principal aide to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy indicates that in May, 1963, Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson played a key role in persuading the President to take impending civil-rights legislation to the people as a national moral issue. Mr. Johnson's approach prevailed, apparently over the objections of some White House advisers who counseled a strictly legalistic strategy.

6.5 Million Released

The newly opened files bring to 6.5 million the number of documents made available at the Kennedy Library since it was transferred here from the National Archives in Washington in October, 1969. They represent 42 per cent of the 15.2-million papers that will eventually be moved to the permanent building of the library, to be constructed on the Charles River in nearby Cambridge as part of the John F. Kennedy School of Government complex at Harvard University.

With all secret documents removed by Government archivists—many of the released documents were originally labeled "confidential"—the White House files are not likely to provide any momentous new insights into the Kennedy Admin-

istration's major decisions. Essentially, they offer a graphic picture of the day-to-day operations of that lofty office known as "the Presidency" through its bulging folders of "route slips" directing mail to various agencies, of records of executive appointments, of congratulatory messages and of occasional playful annotations by Presidential aides—a human counterpoint to the deadpan prose of bureaucracy.

Here and there the gray cardboard boxes yield a few unknown or little-known letters from the President, exchanges with chiefs of state or private citizens or confidential inter-agency memorandums that provide some interesting footnotes to history.

On such major controversial policy questions as Vietnam, the materials made available are generally confined to marginal correspondence. Nonetheless, a few memorandums and the manner in which the documents were handled clearly indicate the Administration's sensitivity and internal dissent over the issue.

Carefully Prepared Replies

The sensitivity is illustrated by the carefully prepared replies to letters from Congressmen and their constituents, either criticizing the support of the South Vietnam regime or questioning the scope of the United States involvement.

For example, a letter from Mrs. Evelyn Schultz of Allen Park, Mich., forwarded to the White House by Representative John Lesinski on Feb. 2, 1962, received the attention of three Assistant Secretaries of State and such top White House aides as McGeorge Bundy, Lawrence J. O'Brien and Ralph A. Dungan.

In 1961 a letter on Vietnam policy from a Vietnamese was

referred to Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. for a reply through a White House "route slip" signed by Mr. Dungan. Mr. Schlesinger rerouted it to Mr. Bundy with the handwritten comment: "Some one who understands our policy should answer this!" A reply was finally written on Nov. 25 by Walt W. Rostow, a firm advocate of American military involvement.

Mr. Bundy's comment congratulating Mr. Salinger for his "excellent prose" was penned on the draft of a press release following a Vietnam strategy meeting of President Kennedy's principal aides in Honolulu three weeks after the military coup in which President Ngo Dinh Diem was killed. The communiqué reported that the meeting heard "a hopeful prognosis for the principal objective of U. S. policy in South Vietnam—the successful prosecution of the war against the Vietcong." The communiqué was dated Nov. 21, 1963, a day before President Kennedy's assassination in Dallas.

Action Against Castro

On Cuba, the files show that President Kennedy was pressed by a number of White House visitors to follow up the unsuccessful Bay of Pigs invasion with forceful action to remove Premier Fidel Castro.

On April 28, 1961, Senator Goldwater wrote the President, alluding to a discussion they had a few days earlier in which Mr. Kennedy evidently warned about possible Soviet reactions to a United States strike against the island.

"I have carefully considered



Photographs for The New York Times by JOYCE DOPKEEN

Among President Kennedy's memorabilia at library are seal, golf cart and rocking chair

you whether he had held my lapels or not. He may have. He absolutely poured out his soul. He really—he must have been four inches away from me really telling it to me like he thought. And he did not hold these views lightly. And he really did reach out and grab the flag beside his desk to punctuate what he was saying.”
 “Though the incident was men-

the problem as you outlined it,” the Arizona Republican said, “and I have come to the conclusion that even though Russia will probably invade Berlin or Iran or some other place, our main force, the Strategic Air Command, could complete the necessary Cuban operations very quickly and be available for tasks elsewhere. Because of this, I would not hesitate to make the decision to invade Cuba to rid this hemisphere of the threat of extended Communism.”

Mr. Kennedy's dissatisfaction with the Foreign Service was reflected a fortnight after he took office when he said in a stiff note to Mr. Rusk:

“I am concerned that we send to foreign embassies the best people we can get. I had been under the impression that we were going to retire those career officers who did not meet a high standard. Would you have a list prepared of those Foreign Service officers who have been retired or selected for retirement as a result of this policy who would not have been retired by us under ordinary circumstances for age or health.”

Smoothing Ruffled Feelings

In contrast, there were also attempts by Mr. Bundy to smooth the ruffled feelings of the career Foreign Service. When the department asked for an appointment with the President for John Moors Cabot before he left for his post as Ambassador to Poland, Mr. Bundy penned this note on the request: “I think the President should do this. Cabot is very senior & Pres can do a lot by telling him he does too love the Foreign Service—and Warsaw is important, of course.”

Conflicting views about the President's relationship with Secretary Rusk were expressed

by Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas and Under Secretary George C. McGhee in oral history interviews.

Justice Douglas recalled that Mr. Kennedy “told me he took Rusk because he was a good errand boy” and said, “He was loyal to Jack and served him well. But the whole weight of the State Department as Jack knew and Jack often told me, was on the side of the status quo, not rocking the boat, not doing anything.”

Asked what Cabinet members played an important role in the Kennedy Administration, Mr. McGhee said: “First and foremost, I believe, the President relied on the Secretary of State, and increasingly as they got used to working together.”

On national affairs, a newly opened oral history interview with a high Justice Department official attributes a central role in the Administration's plans for sweeping new civil rights legislation to Vice President Johnson at a time when Kennedy historians have virtually discounted his influence.

The account is by Norbert A. Schlei, a Deputy Attorney General, who was asked by Robert Kennedy to call on Mr. Johnson in May, 1963, following a White House strategy meeting. The Vice President, he said, was “a little nettled” because he had tried, and apparently failed, to get his message to the President through Kenneth O'Donnell, the President's appointments secretary, but that “Kenny hadn't done anything about it.”

“The most important recommendation he had to make,” Mr. Schlei said, “was that he thought the President ought to make a series of speeches, perhaps preferably in the South, where he talked about civil rights in moral terms, maybe

even religious terms. He ought to say that this is a problem that we have to do the right thing on, we can't equivocate any longer; and he ought to say that on moral, religious grounds it's intolerable that people should be treated as some people are treated in our country; and he ought to talk about patriotism.”

“And the Vice President reached out and grabbed the flag that was there, and he said, you know, ‘A man can be on his way to die for this country, and he can't get a cup of coffee in a public restaurant on an interstate highway.’ He said, ‘The President's got to tell the people that.’

“And he said, ‘Even people in Mississippi, you know, when they listen to him saying that, they can't disagree. . . . And nobody's ever said, ever put this thing on a moral, emotional basis. Let's talk about God and morality and goodness and simple justice and patriotism and get that involved in the thing.’”

Southern Foes Consulted

Then Mr. Johnson offered to take practical steps to assure passage of the bill by consulting with its Southern foes. “I'd go to Dick Russell,” the vice President was quoted as saying, referring to the Georgia Democrat who was the dean of the Senate, “I'd tell him all about the bill, and I'd write down everything he said, and I'd see if I couldn't fix it in advance so that his arguments would misfire as much as they possibly could.”

After the meeting, Mr. Schlei wrote a memorandum to the Attorney General that was later submitted to the President. The Justice Department official, clearly impressed with the emotional tone of the encounter, recalled Mr. Johnson in the interview almost five years later: “To this day I couldn't tell



John F. Stewart, the acting director of the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library announced move on papers.

tioned neither in Theodore Sorensen's or Mr. Schlesinger's histories of the Kennedy Administration, Mr. Schlei said he thought the Vice President's comments were partly responsible for the President's subsequent speeches on the legislation, "which was the first occasion in the history of this country, when the President talked about civil rights on a moral basis."

Other Justice Department materials became available from the files of Burke Marshall, Robert Kennedy's Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Civil Rights Division. It is the first collection of personal papers donated to the library that has been opened to the public.

The Marshall papers reflect Robert Kennedy's striking capacity for detail, such as repeated requests to his assistant for names of department officials who did outstanding work in such crisis as that on civil rights or in the Cuban prisoners exchange so he could write them notes of appreciation.

Political Allies Rewarded

The Attorney General also believed in rewarding political allies. Hearing that Frank A. Rose, president of the University of Alabama, who had cooperated with the Administration's desegregation efforts, had pains in his feet, Mr. Kennedy arranged an appointment for him with the President's physician, Dr. Janet Travell.

The results were indicated in the copy of a letter Mr. Rose

wrote Dr. Travell on July 11, 1963: "I am most appreciative of your discovering a need for a lift in my shoe. I now walk and stand with more balance, and at the end of the day I am not as tired as I formerly was. I will always remain indebted to you. . . ." At the bottom of the page was a long-hand note to Mr. Marshall: "We've done it again! RFK."

Although the Kennedy Library—like the country's six other Presidential libraries—is run by the National Archives, the opening of files is jointly supervised by members of its staff, who are Federal employees, and a "screening committee" headed by Mr. Marshall on behalf of the Kennedy family.

Other members of the committee are Mr. Sorensen, who was President Kennedy's speech writer and now practices law in New York, and Prof. Herman Kahn, a former director of the National Archives and now librarian at Yale University.

"Our guiding principle," Mr. Marshall said the other day in New Haven, where he is a member of the Yale Law School faculty, "is that everything should be opened. It is our fundamental belief that the interest of the Kennedy family is best served by making all the material available to historians as quickly as possible. Of course, we have no authority to declassify Government documents, but we can complain when the Government is too slow about it."