

Thousands File Past Kennedy Bier

Sentinel Washington Bureau

Washington, D. C.—They poured into the capitol by the thousands to pay tribute to their fallen leader.

All of the members of John F. Kennedy's family and the hundreds of public officials had left. Now it was time for the people.

Some of them had been here since Saturday night, sleeping in cars, huddling in blankets.

At 2:30 p.m., Sunday they got their chance. They streamed into the rotunda, and split into two paths to pass around the circular roped off area where the body lay in a closed casket draped with an American flag.

This is the area beneath the massive capitol dome. It is a room steeped in American tradition—with large paintings of such events as the Pilgrim landing at Plymouth Rock, the Revolutionary war, the baptism of Pocahontas and De Soto's discovery of the Mississippi river.

The brightness of the television lights from one side of the rotunda added a garish touch, but it did not detract from the solemnity of the occasion. The coffin was surrounded by a five man military honor guard.

The mass of humanity waiting to pay last respects to Mr. Kennedy stretched across the east capitol lawn and for blocks beyond. Officials promised that they would keep the rotunda open as long as the people kept coming, even if it took all night.

They all came—young and old, rich and poor, white and black. Children were carried in their mothers' arms. The crippled hobbled past the bier with crutches and canes.

They came in all kinds of apparel. There were furs worth thousands and cotton dresses or faded dungarees worth a few dollars.

Most of the mourners were calm and grim. But there were some whose grief could not be kept inside. These

wept unashamedly and the tears streamed down their faces.

In contrast to Saturday's heavy rain, which was more fitting for this national tragedy, Sunday dawned on Washington with a clear, azure sky.

The sun bathed the east side of the White House. The Washington monument towered in the background. By 8 a.m., five hours before the casket was to be taken to the capitol, the people already had started to gather along Pennsylvania av. in Lafayette park across from the White House.

Television crews were busy setting up their equipment to send the start of the procession to living rooms across the country.

The Pennsylvania av. sidewalk in front of the White House was roped off and unavailable for public use.

The temperature was in the high forties, but a northwest wind added a raw edge.

Many families lined the street, and one was struck by the youth of the crowd. Parents had candy to keep their children happy and sandwiches to feed their families as the noon hour approached.

The children became restless, as they would waiting for any parade.

"Will we see Caroline?" one little girl asked her mother.

Transistor radios blared the news that Mr. Kennedy's accused assassin had been shot in Dallas, and a stir went through the crowd. Radios were pressed to ears as if that gesture could bring more details faster.

Necks craned as 1 p.m. approached, although the spectators were too far away to see which family members were getting into the long,

black limousines at the White House steps.

The few leaves on the barren trees rustled as the caisson bearing the casket started moving down the driveway toward the street to the mournful sound of drums muffled with black cloth.

Several doves fluttered down on the lawn—a symbolic tribute perhaps to the strenuous efforts made by Mr. Kennedy to keep the peace.

The black caisson rolled into the street with the six horses pulling it, snorting in the cool air. A seventh gray horse preceded the others, but was not attached to the caisson.

Behind the caisson, as the sign of grief for a dead warrior, walked a riderless horse, its stirrups reversed.

The procession took only a few minutes to pass any particular point. Thousands trailed after it in the streets. Three times on the way to the capitol, the police had to move in and block off the street to control the surging crowds.

At the capitol, 45 minutes later, spectators used any possible vantage point to view the ceremony on the outside plaza, only a stone's throw from where Mr. Kennedy had delivered such a magnificent inaugural address less than three years ago.

Trees were prized spots and several large branches were broken by youths clambering to get a better view.

They heard the 21 gun salute and the rest of the ceremony and saw the straining sailors carry the casket up the scores of steps leading to the rotunda.

The family members and officials then heard a brief ceremony. Mrs. Kennedy continued her remarkable composure, but a stir went through the audience as she kissed the casket with Caroline at her side.

The family and officials filed out. It was the people's turn.