

**James MacGregor Burns, Oral History Interview – 5/14/1965**  
Administrative Information

**Creator:** James MacGregor Burns  
**Interviewer:** William H. Brubeck  
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**Biographical Note**

Burns, a political scientist, educator, Massachusetts political figure, member of the Massachusetts delegation to the Democratic National Convention (1952, 1956, 1960, 1964), and author of *John F. Kennedy, a Political Profile* (1960), discusses the assessments of Kennedy that he made in that book, Kennedy and Theodore C. Sorensen's critiques of the book, the authorship of *Profiles in Courage*, and whether or not Kennedy's decision-making involved emotion, among other issues.

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By James MacGregor Burns

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DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

September 13, 1973

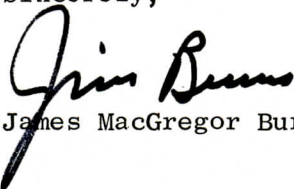
Mr. John F. Stewart  
Assistant Director for Archives  
John F. Kennedy Library  
380 Trapelo Road  
Waltham, Massachusetts 02154

Dear Mr. Stewart:

I have just written Dan Fenn to indicate that I was lifting my restrictions on material of "mine" at the Library. Referring back to our correspondence of 8 months or so ago, I am not sure that I need include a statement for the Sorensen file on my book on Kennedy. Perhaps the same purpose could be served if there were some indication on the file that the material at the John F. Kennedy Library, while extensive, did not of course -- or does not -- cover all aspects of the writing of the Kennedy biography, and I would be happy to correspond with any scholar interested in the writing of the book.

If you want something more specific and formal on this I would be happy to supply it, as I have already indicated to Dan Fenn.

Sincerely,

  
James MacGregor Burns

JMB:fb

James MacGregor Burns

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Oral History Interview

with

James MacGregor Burns

May 14, 1965  
London, England

By William H. Brubeck

For the John F. Kennedy Library

BRUBECK: Let me start, Jim, by asking you about probably the most controversial thing you've ever written about John F. Kennedy, and which I suppose was the ultimate commentary of your book. You said (you correct me if this is not a good way of stating it)—the basic question of reservation that one might have after examining him as a potential president (this was in your biography of 1959) was a question of what kind of emotional commitment he had, whether his heart was in the thing he was doing, or whether this was purely an intellectual, disciplined enterprise. Maybe you ought to expand on what in fact you did say before you go ahead to answer that.

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BURNS: Yes, I might say first of all that I wrote that memorandum of December 19, 1964, and after that left for a rather extended piece of travel, and I'm now here with you in London not having seen the document I wrote on December 19, so there may not be a resemblance between what I say tonight and what I said in the document. On the point you mention—there was always a great deal of ambiguity about the remark of mine which I made at the end of my biography of Kennedy, you have expressed it well—the whole question of whether there was something beyond a policy or intellectual commitment. There was a great deal of ambiguity in my observation, and again and again people have come back to me in television interviews and in other ways as to

whether I meant what I said and how did I feel now—now being during the Kennedy Administration or after Kennedy's death. I may be at fault in that I never defined this concept very carefully, partly because by its very nature it was

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somewhat indefinable. But I think the best way I could put it now is that I wondered when I was writing about Kennedy, and I still wondered during the presidency, as to whether his approach to policy and to great decisions was essentially a policy of calculation, a policy of very carefully measuring prudent aspects of what he was doing, very carefully weighing the impact of what he was proposing to do on a number of different publics and doing this well, of course, and doing all this in terms of rather short-run pragmatic criteria. The question was whether, if there should be some great moral issue that was beyond the possibilities of calculus, Kennedy would be willing to make a decision in terms of some overriding moral purpose very hard to define, hazy, inchoate, complex, instead of in terms of immediately calculable, political practical advantage and disadvantage. The kind of thing that I would compare this to historically would be a comparison between Lincoln [Abraham Lincoln] and Douglas [Stephen A. Douglas] in

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the 1850's. Douglas was an extremely astute calculator, and of course Lincoln was too. Douglas sized up almost every aspect of the political situation in the 1850's, except the overriding moral issue which unloosed a series of events in the mid-1850's that changed the nature and shape of American politics. One reason I raised this question about Kennedy was drawn from my discussions and conversations with him. Time and time again I was struck by how detached, objective, rational he was in dealing with matters that could have been approached from a rather ideological, perhaps rather wishful, wishy-washy, intellectual, utopian way. Of course, a great contrast between him and some of the more doctrinaire, ideological, intellectual liberals with whom he did not get along very well was developed in my book to some extent, and in some of the notes to the book. And it's hard to think of many examples now, but one thing that comes to mind is when I was running for Congress

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(I forget now whether this is in my document) in 1958 and he was running again for senator, he agreed to appear before a television camera for a television film that I could use at will in the first Congressional district in my own campaign, which was a very nice thing for him to do. So at his suggestion, I prepared a statement, a kind of dialogue between him and myself, and I gave this to him in Boston just before we were to be filmed, and I imagine my statement was rather general, perhaps even a bit sentimental, perhaps with a little bit of blarney for a Massachusetts audience. I remember particularly that there was a nice reference to Jackie Kennedy [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy] at the beginning as a little way to get things started, perhaps a sentence or two. I remember his going through this and throwing out



the Jackie reference without pause, and then cutting the rest of it down, perhaps partly for time considerations. But what one ended up with was a very rather pedestrian, useful,

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but not very exciting exchange of comments. And when I asked him—as I think I recalled in the book—I asked him if he had ever been very heavily in love, traumatically in love—although I don't think I used that word, traumatic—he turned it aside, obviously not very interested in talking about that kind of thing. I feel still, I'd like to raise this as a possibility, that he grew up very sensitive to the impression that his grandfather, Honey Fitz [John Francis Fitzgerald], had created. Honey Fitz was a man who would break into song at parties at the slightest provocation, or with no provocation at all, and sing "Sweet Adeline." Everybody in Boston, of course, remembers this. He was such a picture of the clowning-type, sentimental-type, blarney-type Irishman. But I've often wondered whether Kennedy was very anxious because of his own circumstances, going to Harvard, trying, I think, to make out well with more sophisticated types, Protestant types, whether Kennedy was not reacting against

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Fitzgerald's sentimentalism and blarney.

BRUBECK: Well, he was actually a very sentimental man himself.

BURNS: Who? Fitzgerald?

BRUBECK: John Kennedy.

BURNS: That's a great question. Was he a sentimental person?

BRUBECK: Well, in some respects he certainly was. He had that album of Irish songs that he was very fond of that he played for his own personal pleasure.

BURNS: Do we know about this?

BRUBECK: What do you mean?

BURNS: Is this part of the press agency?

BRUBECK: Oh no, I've seen the album.

BURNS: Where?

BRUBECK: In his office.

BURNS: Well, we hear that he played *Camelot*, and I've recently seen *Camelot* here

and I was very moved by it, especially because of the Kennedy association and the phrasing and so on, the brief shining moment and all the rest, but you

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could play that kind of music without necessarily being a sentimentalist. In any event, even if he were a sentimentalist, it isn't quite what I'm getting at, even though I've made the point about his being anti-sentimental. Perhaps because....

BRUBECK: No, I don't think it necessarily goes go to your point, but I always think its quite possible that this was a man who for other reasons wanted to keep his sentiments under control and was embarrassed about showing his feelings in public but did have a lot of feelings. For example, he could never fire anybody, he was a very soft-hearted man. And he's a man who even to the end of it was a little self-conscious. There's a funny spot in that movie USIA did about him this past year where with thousands of people screaming around him as he gets into a car in Ireland, he's self-consciously adjusting his necktie. Very interesting little gesture.

BURNS: Yes, I remember that.

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BRUBECK: But go ahead. I was just trying to add a little touch....

BURNS: Well, I think this is all relevant. I too have heard the story that he was a sentimentalist, and a man of deep emotional feeling. Of course, this gets into some very difficult areas. Is a man a man of great emotional feeling who never shows it? I'm sure we're going to have books in future years indicating that Cal Coolidge [Calvin Coolidge] was a man of great feeling. I'm sure that Cal Coolidge and Warren G. Harding [Warren Gamaliel Harding] will be raised in the pantheon of presidents by some iconoclastic historian or biographer. And I suppose psychologically and technically we're all people of great feeling who show themselves in different ways. So this is a very difficult problem. Well, let me reduce it to what seems to me the crucial point politically and that is to what extent is a president willing to act on the basis of a great feeling of commitment which may not be very carefully based on rational considerations

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because the facts are not known or are very hard to interpret. That is, to what extent will a president or a politician be able to take, be willing to take, a leap in the dark? Or parallel with that, the question of whether Kennedy would ever have been willing to follow or to emulate his own heroes in *Profiles in Courage*. This is fascinating because, of course, these were people who risked and often gave up their political career in pursuit of some great cause.

BRUBECK: Certainly not on rational calculation necessarily.

BURNS: Not necessarily on rational calculations, unless you interpret that phrase so widely as to include all kinds of mental activity—you know, like the woman who sacrifices her life for her child. You could say this is terribly emotional, irrational or you could say it is a not only irrational but a very egotistic act. But in the case of Kennedy, on the second point I don't think this was a

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man who would have gone down to defeat in behalf of some great moral issue. Incidentally, I might say that I don't know that I think such a man *would* make a good president. The question of whether Kennedy *was* a man of heart and whether he *should* have been a man of heart is a whole issue in itself which has become somewhat ignored in this controversy such as it has been. In any event, I can't think of any case where Kennedy would have really jeopardized his career as the *Profiles in Courage* heroes jeopardize theirs.

BRUBECK: What about his refusal to sign John McCormack's [John William McCormack] petition for Curley [James Michael Curley] in 1948—or whatever it was?

BURNS: I think that was courageous. And also a political act in that he knew that there was a whole other side of Massachusetts which he could appeal to. After all there is the side of Massachusetts that Henry Cabot Lodge and Saltonstall [Leverett Saltonstall] and earlier people like Ely appealed to and I think he in part was

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catering to them. He knew he would get some response from them for an act of courage of this sort. I don't think this would be equivalent to a real threat to his re-election, such as was involved in the *Profiles in Courage* people.

BRUBECK: Well, you know, Ted Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen], and I think some of the other people around Kennedy who very much resented your comments on this subject on Kennedy, answer that you just didn't know Kennedy well enough and that you are commenting as a professor from a distance, and so forth, and generally they just dismissed this. Do you want to say anything about that at all?

BURNS: Well, I think the question of knowing Kennedy is a straw man. Who really knows another man? Who really knows himself? Being close to a person isn't necessarily knowing him, as we know from our relations with wives, children and others. Indeed, knowing a man is what biography is all about, and whether one knave a won or not is a very broad intellectual

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question. So I don't think that is particularly the issue. I think the issue is a much broader one. It is not one's closeness or distance from a president physically or otherwise. It's the question of how realistic are the criteria that one sets up, and what I would like to do is to say here that I have never been convinced that I set up fair or adequate or effective criteria for Kennedy. First of all, I myself felt that during his Administration he showed he was willing to make a political commitment. For example, the partial test ban treaty was a commitment, it seems to me, though not necessarily risky in a political sense. I think where he was intellectually convinced about something he was willing to pursue it despite political difficulties. So that intellectually and in terms of policy I think he was a committed president. So what I am left with is simply this final moral thing which I am afraid will have to be left in somewhat ambiguous form because unlike the

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political and intellectual kinds of commitment this one is a leap-in-the-dark kind of thing. It is where you go beyond rational calculation as some great leaders have done. It is where you act on faith and not just on rationality.

BRUBECK: It's some kind of conviction that transcends rational force.

BURNS: Exactly. Something that comes from the heart is a matter of deep feeling, deep emotion, deep commitment and I'm not sure that I want a president of that type. It depends a lot on the nature of the issues. Now we can say about FDR [Franklin Delano Roosevelt] that in 1940 he was deeply enough committed to stopping Nazi aggression or deeply enough committed to helping the British that he was willing to take pretty risky action in the summer of 1940, in the Destroyer Deal, with an election coming up in the fall. Also he was a man who could utter some very compromising statements in his campaign. But the interesting thing there is that Roosevelt's

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deeds were very courageous even though he made some very weasel-like statements during his campaign. And whether Kennedy had that kind of ultimate moral commitment is something that I still don't know. Remember I was asking this as a question always—whether he had this, time would show.

BRUBECK: In all the time that you spent discussing with him—and with Ted Sorensen and anybody else you may have discussed with that you think was really speaking for him directly—your book before publication when they were unhappy about its possible effects on his campaign, did he ever address himself to this particular point?

BURNS: I don't think Kennedy did. I am trying to think back to the documents, to

the critique of the book that he did, the President, John F. Kennedy, then Senator did, and Ted Sorensen did. There were two separate....

BRUBECK: In writing?

BURNS: ....written in critiques. Yes.

BRUBECK: Where are they now?

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BURNS: I have them. And the one from Ted Sorensen was a very severe, somewhat emotional document in which he did comment on this and in a rather *pro forma* way in a paragraph or two said, how can you question the commitment of a man who has done such and such. I think he may have mentioned the McCormack petition incident. I don't think that John Kennedy's critique related to that issue. The kind of thing he got very concerned about were references to his father [Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.], to his family, to specific issues like McCarthyism [Joseph R. McCarthy] and so on. Incidentally, I would mention McCarthyism as an example of the kind of thing I am concerned about here where Kennedy did not like McCarthy, did not agree with his position, was critical of him in many ways, but did not feel....

BRUBECK: Even his taste was probably offended by McCarthy.

BURNS: Yes, basically. Here was McCarthy, the other type of Irishman that Kennedy tried so hard to disassociate himself with. But I don't

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think Kennedy was ever terribly upset by McCarthy as a moral issue. I think this is a pretty good item in defense of my position because it's McCarthyism as a moral issue that will live in history. People will have forgotten a lot of the individual things he did. It's the image of McCarthy, the whole brutal, bullying disregard for civil liberties and for people that will seem as a great moral issue and I think to a great extent Kennedy missed the moral issue of McCarthy.

BRUBECK: As far as you recall it, he never addressed himself specifically to this issue with you?

BURNS: No.

BRUBECK: Apart from concern as to whether you had said something critical of his father and things of this sort that didn't directly affect but simply were possibly the clan protective feeling, what were the things that seemed to bother him most about the book, Jim?

BURNS: Well the—I think the issue of liberalism; perhaps it is related to what we have been talking about.

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BRUBECK: It's probably a practical political concern, wasn't it? That he just didn't want to have you casting doubts on his liberalism when you were a man of liberal credentials and this was the eve of a campaign when he badly needed to convince the liberals in the Democratic party in order to get the nomination?

BURNS: I think it was partly this, but it was partly the other—and that is I think he had the feeling from the way I wrote the book, for example, my making so much of the McCarthy issue and other such issues earlier, I think I appeared to him as a somewhat emotional type of liberal and in my book—or in the footnotes to the book—there is a reference to the kind of liberal that Kennedy disliked. I beg your pardon, I think this also was in their critique of the book where Kennedy does defend himself on the issue of liberalism and he says in his comments (which were addressed to Ted Sorensen and Ted Sorensen passed on to me, I presume with Kennedy's OK):

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“Now there are some emotional types of liberals that you and I don't like” and he mentioned a woman, I believe a CIO political action type in Michigan, and I know exactly the type that Kennedy was referring to because these people get me riled up too. I read about them regarding Viet Nam and they are the type of people that boo Harriman [William Averell Harriman] off a platform at Cornell, I gather; rigid, doctrinaire, emotional, sometimes neurotic, and even psychotic. You know, these are the people who are always seeing conspiracies and so on. I feel there is a difference between this dogmatic and intolerant type of liberal and the passionately involved liberal of the type I was talking about earlier. In any event, Kennedy was perfectly willing to recognize and perfectly willing to accept and be proud of the difference between himself and that kind of emotional liberal. He felt he was a practical liberal who, of course, would make much more progress through his operationalism than the emotional liberals

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ever would make. And, of course, he probably was right about that. So that this, I think, was the great issue in the book to Kennedy—that I was taking that kind of liberal stand as against a person who was innately and fundamentally a liberal and was not getting enough credit for that in the book. Because the book, for example, made so much of something like McCarthyism, which to Kennedy would not seem nearly so important as something like education, or civil rights, or the like.

BRUBECK: Let me switch from that. I think the topic that you probably were most

interested in after he became President when you talked to him and the one you tried hardest to interest him in was the issue of party reform—trying to make the Democratic Party a more effective and disciplined organization for serving presidential purpose, trying to make the President more clearly and structurally the leader of the Democratic Party and the things one might do to do so. I have the impression

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you talked to him on several occasions about it.

BURNS: That's right.

BRUBECK: But I don't have the impression you ever got him very interested in it, did you?

BURNS: That's right.

BRUBECK: Why not? Was he more interested in it, you think, before he became president than later?

BURNS: I don't think he was ever very interested. I think the remarks he made about it before he became president were a part of the papers and proposals that were fed into him as part of the general liberal ideology. And I think he obviously would have liked a more disciplined party. Obviously he wanted that. The question of it was what concession, what price would he pay and he felt, I think, that this item was pretty low in the order of priorities. But he taught me something about this too, and this, by the way, will emerge in a book that I've written and presumably will be published late this year or early next called *Presidential*

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*Government*, in which I have what I call a personal preface. I mention some of these discussions with Kennedy on the issue of the presidency and how I may never have influenced him much or interested him much in party responsibility. But I think he gave me and all of us a demonstration of presidential leadership. And actually this has always been my main interest too. I have been interested in party discipline almost exclusively in terms of to what extent it would support leadership. My central belief, in terms of Democratic machinery, can be summed up in two words—Democratic leadership. And the reason I like the British system is not because of the system of discipline, which I myself would find intolerable, but because it permits leadership. It means a prime minister can go ahead and do what he thinks has to be done during a four or five year period and he knows he will have the support in Parliament to back him up. And this I think is a great

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lesson of Kennedy's Administration—that instead of having an agreed on group of supporters, as the prime minister ordinarily finds in his country, Kennedy was often able to piece together a temporary coalition. I feel that a great price was paid often for this and that in the long run it might not have been very effective. But I just want to be sure that the nature of the issue, of the main issue, is clear—that it is a question of what produces the most effective leadership. And I think that Kennedy demonstrated that there are other ways besides party discipline of finding the basis for leadership. I still am doubtful about the method he found—the method of, as I say, of piecing together temporary alliances and coalitions. Picking up support, moving across party lines, appealing to Republicans, sometimes blurring national issues because you are dealing with the Dirksens [Everett M. Dirksen] or even the Hallecks [Charles A. Halleck] and the Harry Byrds [Harry F. Byrd], and the like. I think this

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question really connects up with the first question you raised. That is, the more one goes in for this kind of operationalism, piecing together alliances across party lines, across ideological lines, doing things in terms of personal relationships, immediate specific deals, working through the less ideological types, like the Larry O'Briens [Lawrence F. O'Brien], and so on—the more you do this, the more you may blur the great national issues and thus obscure the great national debating grounds. That is, the more you detract from the possibility of going to the country in an election, which would be a bit emotional with good guys and bad guys, the more you bargain and deal with the "bad guys," the more you blur the ideological and broader policy issues, and the more you confuse the people (because to the average man it is the party that differentiates between sets of candidates). The voter may not know much about personalities, but Democratic and Republican mean something

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to him, and we have a lot of evidence on this from the Michigan Survey Research Center. The result is to enhance deals, bargains, operationalism in politics and to divest it of moral commitment.

BRUBECK: You know, it's rather interesting, the Kennedys were credited, I think rightly, with probably being as organizationally skillful and operationally skillful in their politics as anybody who has come along. They did organize their campaign very methodically; they held their card files; their organization at the convention was supposed to have been one of the most systematic and overwhelming technically that had ever been achieved. So he had some interest in political organization all right but he wasn't prepared to sacrifice any immediate short-term objectives like getting support for a bill in Congress to the long-term objectives of a more effective party organization, party leadership. Even leaving that aside, however, his interest in the machinery and the organization of

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politics didn't seem to extend beyond putting together a personal machine in a very short run tactical sense that could control the situation with it.

BURNS: That's right. And I think that illustrates a point. His personal political machine was, I think—I'll go out on a limb here—I think it was the most effective, most efficient, most imaginative, most skillful personal political machine in the history of American politics. And I would be willing to document that if we had time. But it was a *Kennedy* organization, not a *party* organization, not a Democratic Party organization, not a liberal organization as such. And again there is a lot to say for it depending on how one analyzes American politics, and this again relates to my study of presidential government. Because once you make a commitment to party, you link your personal organization and your personal activities with the great tradition in history and standing of a major political party. This

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is where sometimes you have to subordinate your own immediate personal organization and objectives to the tradition and broader purpose of the party. Well, Kennedy didn't have to meet that test very much but I would argue that if he ever had had to meet a clean cut choice between going down for what seemed the most effective in terms of his personal organization and what seemed appropriate in terms of what the Democratic Party had come to stand for, he would have forsaken ideology and party for practical, pragmatic, personal organization politics. And again there is a lot to be said for that kind of activity.

BRUBECK: Let me ask you, if I may, just a couple of specifics that I don't think are altogether covered in the material you have given me. One is that you mentioned at some point that when he was working on *Profiles*, I think down in Florida when he was convalescing from his operation, and beginning to work on the book, you had some correspondence, I guess some

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relation with him. He was asking your opinion on some things, or asking you for some material. Could you elaborate on that a little bit?

BURNS: Yes, a little. There is not too much of a story there. It was my first real contact with Kennedy. He wrote me and I assume other academic people in Massachusetts and perhaps outside. First, as I recall, asking for suggestions for the pantheon of courageous people. Probably spelling out a bit what his criteria were, and I responded to that letter. I had some help; I turned to the historians at Williams and got some ideas from them and wrote him a letter and he acknowledged this in a preface to the book. I don't really feel I contributed very much. I acted perhaps mainly as a middle man. I had some ideas of my own. So that that's about all I can say about my own role. I should add that I had the impression at the time that somebody was helping him on this. Obviously, he was not well yet and had to have help. I had the

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impression at the time that somebody, perhaps Ted Sorensen, was taking a good deal of initiative in rounding up academic help. And I think still there is some question as to how completely Kennedy deserves credit for that book. I am just speculating here. Let me say that I satisfied myself in writing my own book, that Kennedy had done a significant or a substantial amount of work on that book.

BRUBECK: You mean from the evidence you found in manuscript form?

BURNS: The evidence I found in manuscript form, the actual manuscript that I looked at, which was in Kennedy's handwriting. Not a whole manuscript, but a rather extensive one. Then from talking with associates and from seeing a very interesting exchange between Kennedy and a Democratic Senator—I believe it was Senator Neuberger [Richard L. Neuberger] of Oregon—in which Kennedy had indicated he was somewhat upset by rumors that he had not written the book and he not only invited but more or less urged

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Neuberger to stop in at his office sometime and look at the manuscript so that there would be someone who himself was a literary man who could testify that Kennedy had written the book. So I am sure that Kennedy did most of the book. As I wrote in my own book, I think Sorensen, or whoever was helping him, presumably Sorensen, gave him more help on the book than you or I could hope to get if we were doing one.

BRUBECK: I heard somewhere along the line that the most serious strain in relationships between Kennedy and Sorensen came over this question. The inference being that he began to think that maybe Sorensen was encouraging it or was responsible to some degree for the gossip that it was really Sorensen's book and that this came close to creating a serious issue between them. Do you know anything about that?

BURNS: No. I don't. But there was one episode that I might report here, and this I'll have to ask that it be part of the restricted part of this, although, I am afraid, it is not very definitive.

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BRUBECK: What you are about to say you would not want to be used without your permission, I take it?

BURNS: That's right. In the period after the book was written—this was a period when Kennedy, of course, was still Senator and Sorensen was making

frequent visits to academic centers in New England. I know he came out to Williams two or three times and I hosted him there to some extent. And I remember during this time quite vividly having lunch with Sorensen at the Student Union, where he had spoken with students—he often would talk to students and try to interest them in public affairs, ostensibly—I think he was also, of course, selling Kennedy, fortunately. On the way out from the Student Union, outside, in a rather flippant way, I said to Sorensen something like, “That was a very good book, *Profiles in Courage*. Who really wrote it?” And I, at the time, understood him to say, “I did.” And I have often thought about this. This was a clear impression I had. But it was

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outside, it was windy and “he” and “I” are two words that can easily be confused and it is rather ironic that there should be any question about it now because he said one or the other very definitely and at the time I thought he said, “I did.” It is something he never would have said later on, no matter who had done it. If he had said either “I did it” or “he did it” at the time, he would have said it with some emphasis. It was a very brief rejoinder; there was no elaborate discussion of this. So, all I can do at this time is to record that my impression at the time was that he said “I did it,” meaning Sorensen did it. But, of course, he might have said that and that might have still been an exaggeration, and I stick to my view that Kennedy substantially wrote that book. And one reason that I stick to this view is later history. At one time we might have wondered about Kennedy as a man of talent. I don’t think now we would raise the question.

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BRUBECK: No, there are too many things where he has taken a text, even a Sorensen text, in type script, and made personal emendations, which turned out to be the best thing in the script. So that even though he may have had a hand in the type script, it’s indisputable that some of the really good language is language that he wrote in without any shadow of a doubt.

BURNS: That’s right.

BRUBECK: While we are still within this restricted caveat of yours, I was looking back through your notes here on this really, for you, I guess quite painful episode of arguing with the Senator and with Sorensen about the book, when, in effect, they were trying to get you to change the manuscript. You haven’t written much about it in this memoir, or at least what you have said is fairly discreet. Do you want to say anything more on this restricted basis about that experience with them?

BURNS: Let me say, first of all, that I still have the two sets of critiques and those someday

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will go to the Kennedy Library. There is a problem—if there is a problem of a politician’s discretion I think there has to be also a recognition of a biographer’s discretion. This was a painful period for me. I don’t want to exaggerate that, because I never felt overly pressed in doing the biography. It was absolutely crucial to me in doing that biography that I retain my professional integrity, if I might sound—what’s the right word for a statement like that—banal or smug or pious—but this is the fact of the case. Once word got out that I was working on that biography, a lot of people, a lot of the academic people whom I respect and whose respect I want to have, made critical comment that this was to be a puff or campaign biography and all the rest. That probably helped to put me on my mettle, but it is very interesting psychologically that my main constituency was the academic constituency. I did not want to lose face with them. But even aside from that there was a certain

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obligation imposed on me as a biographer. And even aside from that, as I used to say to Kennedy, it was no good to him to have some puff come out. He was above all of that. So I was very definite in my approach.

BRUBECK: He had never suggested to you that this book should be a puff anyhow, had he?

BURNS: No indication of that at all. And I don’t think really in his own mind he thought it should be. The problem is to define what is a puff and what is not.

BRUBECK: But when you first talked to him he talked—he took it on its merit that this was a serious attempt at biography.

BURNS: All this was agreed. This was laid out definitively in our correspondence. There was no question about it.

BRUBECK: He obviously thought also it was going to serve some useful campaign purposes for him.

BURNS: Of course, because he felt that an honest statement of his life, as any of us might feel, would be an asset to him. The question

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is what is an honest assessment of his life? Do you play up the McCarthy thing, or do you play up his role on bread and butter liberalism? So that’s the kind of basic issue that was involved. In any event, I have the two critiques and someday I’ll give them to the Kennedy Library. I should mention at this point that shortly before I left for Europe early

in February 1965, I had a letter from Sorensen asking that he might see the two critiques, because he had misplaced his copy, if, indeed, he had a copy.

BRUBECK: February '65 this is?

BURNS: February of '65. Right. In perhaps typical Sorensen fashion I had had feelers from Harper and Row, for whom he is writing the book, along this line earlier, but I had not responded to them because I indicated that if he had wanted that he should ask for it himself. He wrote me a very nice letter asking for this and after a good deal of counsel with myself I sent him the two critiques. So that these are

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now possibly to be reflected in some minor way perhaps in his biography. In any event, to get back to your question. I'm sorry I've forgot now—you asked about the critiques, but what was your question about the critiques?

BRUBECK: All I asked you is if you wanted, on a restricted basis, to comment at more length on your quarrel—that's overstating it—but your discussion with Kennedy when he was expressing unhappiness with the biography and putting some pressure on you to change it. In other words, is there anything about that episode that you haven't said on a non-restricted basis that you can say within this restriction that you have imposed on this part of the manuscript?

BURNS: Right. No, I don't know that there is much more. I believe I covered it to some degree in this commentary.

BRUBECK: You never had a face-to-face argument with John F. Kennedy about this book, did you?

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BURNS: No. As I may have mentioned in the document. (And I might say here that when I use the word "document" I am referring to my statement of December 19, 1964.) I think in the document I described this generally. There was not any further story as I recall what I said in the document. During our discussion in the hotel in New York, this four or five hour discussion that I had with Sorensen, on several occasions Sorensen mentioned that Kennedy was upstairs and asked me whether I wanted to speak with Kennedy. Well, I had no interest in speaking with Kennedy, because I felt I had a good statement of his views at hand through Sorensen. But evidently he was perfectly willing to take a hand if Sorensen had thought it was desirable.

BRUBECK: He knew Sorensen was there and, in effect, had planned this little gambit with Sorensen and was sitting up there presumably waiting for a report from Sorensen as to how you had reacted.

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BURNS: Exactly. Kennedy took this very seriously. He felt this was a very important book, from his standpoint. And I think he felt strongly, perhaps too strongly, about its possible impact on his candidacy. I think I mention in the document that when Sorensen called me and said that they thought this could have a critical effect. I doubt it, but one never knows. But I can say without question that they were very aroused about the book and that Kennedy's comments to Sorensen were, I think, the sharpest comments on the part of Kennedy that I have ever seen of his in relation to any issue.

BRUBECK: Shall we go off this restricted basis and back on unrestricted?

BURNS: OK.

BRUBECK: You said to me at some point that you had not been able to find anything of real interest or significance in his period at the London School of Economics when you were working on Kennedy's biography. Is there anything you want to say about that?

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BURNS: Yes, simply this. After I wrote the biography I was told by somebody in England who said that he or she had talked to the registrar of the London School of Economics or some official in the Administrative Office of the London School of Economics. This person said that there was absolutely no record at LSE of John Kennedy ever having any kind of formal connection with the London School of Economics. I pass this on for what it is worth. It may not be worth very much. Except that people tend to play up Kennedy's connection with LSE. Especially his conservative critics like to make something of his having been under the influence of Laski [Harold Laski]. It is perfectly possible that he went to the School, attended lectures, which are usually perfectly open, met Laski and had some intellectual communion with the School without ever having bothered to have any kind of formal connection. It is also very possible that Kennedy or his supporters found it a good device with liberal intellectuals to play up

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the fact that he had been at the London School and if someone exaggerated this, my guess would be (and I say this with the hope that someone will investigate this for what it is worth) that he never had any kind of significant formal relation, that he never spent very much time at the London School, that he never really absorbed the atmosphere of the London School, but that he had some contact, that he met Laski, that he was drawn into the orbit of the School enough to know whether or not he wanted it, and didn't particularly want it. And

aside from all of that, of course, he was busy, he was ill part of the time and probably just didn't have too much time for that kind of thing at best.

BRUBECK: I think we have covered about everything we intended to. I'll just offer you one more opportunity to comment on him in general terms, if you want to. If you had to evaluate him now, five years after the book, with an awful lot of history having intervened, what would

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you say about him now differently than you said or more than you said in your book?

BURNS: I think it is very possible that the book greatly or at least somewhat underestimated John Kennedy. It's very possible that in trying to be judicious and objective and all the rest, that I myself was not much of a profile in courage. It may be that I should have had greater intuition about this man. Actually, I think, any relatively neutral person reading the book would feel this is a fairly strong pro-Kennedy book. But it, perhaps, should have been a stronger pro-Kennedy book. I don't think I really realized the greatness of this man, and I think this was a great man by many tests of greatness. So that's one thing I would like to add in any further comment on him and the book.

BRUBECK: You see a lot of students, since you are a teacher. You think this was a terribly intelligent man, or was he simply a man (a) of a lot of charm, (b) of a lot of self-

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discipline, (c) of an erudition who had used very well what he had had. Was he a very bright man as a student thinker, you think?

BURNS: I think he was a terribly bright man as a politician, policy maker, decision maker, President. He—in my conversations with him, and it seems to be true of so many people—was right up with me and often, I am sure, ahead of me. I have no question about that, really. You know, so often you meet great men and you wonder why are these people great, how have they got where they are, they seem fumbling, slow. And sometimes this impression is wrong. They look slow, but there is a lot going on behind and there is a certain wisdom that has accumulated over the years that's hard to define or appreciate. But even so, Kennedy never struck me that way. And you saw a lot of him, Bill, I don't think he struck you that way, but you can speak for yourself. No, I would say there was a great mind there, a fine mind, just a beautiful

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mechanism there. Whether there was a great mind in the Churchillian [Winston Churchill] kind of greatness, you know, who sticks to an issue through bad years and good, who has almost a whole philosophical style, or the kind of anguish and philosophical reflectiveness that you find in Abe Lincoln, I think that is another question, but in the terms you put, I have nothing but admiration for Kennedy's mind. Thinking of your original final question, there is so much one would like to say, especially on the evening when we have both witnessed a very stirring ceremony (and I think that ought to be recorded in this interview).

BRUBECK: We are talking under the spell of Runnymede tonight.

BURNS: We are talking under the spell of Runnymede, of a magnificent series of tributes by men who know how to speak in the best parliamentary tradition. And a day of unusually good English weather, which always makes one tend toward the happy view of people and events. I think

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maybe I'll stop the machine and just have a chance to....

I don't have much more to offer except that I feel that our dialogue on the whole question of emotional commitment is still very open-ended. As I said my own thoughts are rather inchoate and I'm not sure how much passion and unreason I want in a president. But if you wanted to press me at all a bit further on that I would be glad to be pressed. I deal with this problem, I might say, in this book, because I'm very interested in the whole question of presidential personality, naturally. The extent to which a man is just a calculating machine—what did Bevan [Aneurin Bevan] call Gaitskell [Hugh Gaitskell]—a desiccated calculating machine? We obviously want more, and we had more in Kennedy. The ceremony today is part of that continuing Kennedy splendor. But my question there would be to what extent was the seemingly emotional Kennedy the sentimental Kennedy, the Kennedy who played those records, and to what extent was

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that a bit contrived? And the real Kennedy was calculating even that contrivance?

BRUBECK: Well, I think maybe he was a multiple personality with several layers to him. And I think it is possible to say he was a sentimental, and in some ways an emotional man, in a certain aspect of his personal life as a person, and with his children [Caroline Bouvier Kennedy; John F. Kennedy, Jr.] certainly, as well as some of these other things. Even in his feeling about Ireland maybe a little bit. But that this didn't carry over into his public life. Now when he was doing business he was a very consciously and explicitly rational person. Certainly the meetings I sat with him in on had the feeling he was making an enormous effort to conquer the problem by reason. Not by passion or by moral intuition or anything, but by reason. And he always found it rather difficult, I think, to come to the decision at the end because rarely was it possible for the weight of reason to be overwhelming and therefore the decision was hard because he



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didn't have moral impulse or some overwhelming conviction to carry the day for him. He was trying to depend on reason and reason was never overwhelming in support of a decision one way or another. It seems to me that what you are talking about to a certain extent is his moral passion, or something. Something that Lyndon Johnson [Lyndon Baines Johnson] has. Somewhere or other he gets convictions that are very strong and intense on him and then he is like a hurricane in carrying them out. The intensity with which he pursues them is almost frightening sometimes. There was none of this in John Kennedy that I know of. When he had to sustain a conviction over time, do something over time, as in the Cuban crisis. This was a very difficult agonizing effort for him to sustain it. Because it was being sustained by rational conviction and not by emotional or what I would suspect is more probably moral conviction hers. I am doing the talking now, but let me throw that back at you.

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BURNS: Well, I wanted you to. I think this helps pose the issue. Let me cite two examples of the problem. One would be Kennedy and civil rights. Now Kennedy very carefully calculated civil rights during the first couple of years. He figured, as I see it, that if he pushed civil rights too far he was likely to get the rest of his important bills bogged down in civil rights—that civil rights would carry them down to defeat. So he calculated this rather carefully and I would say there he didn't calculate very well because a lot of those bills went down anyway, but of course one could argue they would have failed even worse if he had aroused the Southerners even more against him. At least as long as he held back from civil rights he had a trading relationship with them. But that is a case where perhaps the moral issue would have been more effective. That is, if he really believed strongly about civil rights that this was the a great overriding domestic issue of tremendous

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moral implications—as we now, I think most of us feel it is and has been—then you just don't calculate. Or you try to keep in mind in calculating that even though maybe it will carry it down, carry the rest of the program down, it might work the other way—that it might carry the rest of the program through. Or whether or not it worked either way, something was so important in itself, it was so important on entering office to take sweeping and radical position on civil rights—as indeed Kennedy himself later did, calling for the civil rights bill—that you just do it because it is the right thing to do. Now, there would be the agony of decision, of knowing all the facts. There would be so many imponderables. It was difficult for him with so many imponderables. But this leads me to my second example. That would be Winston Churchill. Here is Churchill, a man who had a kind of ideology of national security, power, politics, the Germans being bad guys, or at

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least taking a kind of power politics view toward other nations, a kind of old-fashioned national security approach. Here comes a wholly new man in a sense—Adolph Hitler. A man about whom there is a great deal of doubt as to his own makeup. Is he really a man who ultimately will be reasonable or not? And about the nature of the Nazi system—is it a system that has to expand? There were arguments on both sides of this. There were arguments that once Germany got some of its land back and overcame the Versailles Treaty and so on that things would go better. You know, you could get a rational calculus on either side. I don't think Churchill ever sat down and studied Hitler's personality, or studied anything else. I think this man simply had a gut feeling (a) that historically nations fight, so you have got to be on your guard, and (b) that Hitler was a bastard, worse than that he was a cruel and aggressive man because to a man like Churchill, this is what a Hitler would

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seem to be, a gutter snipe type of person, and so on. And he just acted on the basis not of calculation. It was Chamberlain [Neville Chamberlain], I think, who was calculating, and the civil servants type with him. And this is the kind of argument I would advance for some role for passion, intuition, insight, history, ideology, philosophy as against operationalism.

BRUBECK: I just keep thinking of the quotation, I guess its Shakespeare's [William Shakespeare] "Sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." That's what you are talking about.

BURNS: That's right.

BRUBECK: It saps the kind of boldness that it takes to do an awful lot of great things as Churchill did. Churchill could never have found rational fuel to fuel that great engine of decision and resolution that he ran. It had to be fueled by passion. Because it would be just too great a strain on a man to do all of these things on rational certitude.

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BURNS: But this does lead me to this point, and I will make this the concluding point about Kennedy. Here was a man who I feel lacked that kind of passion. That kind of passion, even though he had his own kind of passion and much else. Yet here was a man who, in less than three years, had the kind of impact on the world, the psychological impact on the world, which the speakers today referred to. And I have had a very vivid lesson at this because again and again in the back streets of Calcutta, New Delhi, and other cities of India, and this is March 1965, I would run across stalls where there had been posted pictures, horrible pictures, artistically, of Ghandi [Mahatma Ghandi], Nehru [Jawaharlal Nehru], and of gods. And almost invariably along with those pictures was a picture of John F. Kennedy. Right along with Nehru, and Ghandi and the gods. And I was

walking up above Naples a few weeks ago and ran across a little—what would you call it up on the wall of a house—a little

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shrine, a nativity scene set in the wall, a little modeled nativity scene—a record to Maria Firanni, or somebody like that, and in the corner down there is a picture of John F. Kennedy in Navy uniform. And wherever you go, you get on the subject of Kennedy, and people are just bursting to tell you about what they were doing when they heard the news, or how the news affected them on November 22. There must have been something that goes beyond rational calculus and perhaps beyond passion that this man had because his actual tangible material impact on history was not enough to justify this. After all, he was not a Churchill, he was not a Roosevelt. He didn't have a chance to be these people. I think the thing I would like to end with is the question: why did he have this kind of impact on the world? Was it a fabrication? Was it that he was handsome, and his wife and his kids?—one statesman who had cute little kids. You don't find many. Was it civil rights? But he can't

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claim credit for civil rights. Was it the partial nuclear ban? He himself admitted it was but the first of many steps. It was something that transcends all of this. And it was something that in its own way may be the passionate commitment or reflect the passionate commitment that was not very easy to see during his Administration.

BRUBECK: Thank you. That's all.

BURNS: Why don't you just for the record say that concludes—that then concludes the interview between William H. Brubeck and James K. Burns, May 14, 1965 in London.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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REMEMBRANCES OF JOHN F. KENNEDY

by James MacGregor Burns  
December 19, 1964

(Note: This is not a complete memoir. It should be used in connection with attached documents -- mainly articles on JFK, recorded interviews, etc., and with documents that I will send later to the John F. Kennedy Library.)

I first met John Kennedy in 1950 or 1951, when he was campaigning for the Senate. I met him at a brunch at the home of Robert Cramer in Williamstown, who at that time, as I recall, was not active in politics -- certainly not in local Democratic politics -- but who later ran successfully for state representative and state senator as a Democrat. The meeting was typical of so many that JFK spoke to during this period -- informal, mainly men, rather vague as to purpose except to meet Kennedy. He was pleasant, attractive; he spoke briefly, not very eloquently nor oratorically certainly, but appropriately for the affair. Bob was also a rather typical example of the kind of person whom JFK was interesting in politics and in his own candidacy -- young, not close to the Democratic party, middle-of-the-road politically, with some vague connection with the Kennedys

going back to prep school or athletics or the like.

I saw JFK occasionally in the following years. When he came out to Berkshire County he would often phone. I was simply one of many whom he called; he had a system worked out. One of his aides would actually make the call, ascertain that the right man was at the other end of the line, and then after some delay JFK would come on. He would be pleasant, interested, and to the point. The main business during these years was the slow building up of JFK's personal organization, culminating in his fight with "Onion" Burke -- and indirectly with John McCormack -- in 1956. JFK would consult with me and in general made me feel that I was a "Kennedy man."

In late 1955 I decided on my own a little gambit -- to come out publicly for a national ticket of Stevenson and Kennedy for the following summer. I can testify that this was entirely my own action -- not suggested by anyone representing JFK in any shape or manner. In fact, I had my own axe to grind -- I wanted to be a national delegate again in 1956. I felt that if I tried to clear the idea with the Kennedy office I might get a turndown, so I simply went ahead. I never did get much response from them, as I recall, except perhaps wry amusement or even satisfaction. As it

turned out, I almost came home with the bacon -- or thought I would -- at a crucial point in the vice presidential contest the following summer.

I was in touch with the Kennedy office in regard to the delegate problem, and of course this coincided with the 1956 Massachusetts party fight anyway. At one meeting JFK told me that he had submitted a delegate list to McCormack with my name on it, and that it had come back with my name crossed out. However, whatever the facts of the matter, I finally ended up on the "official" delegate list for the April primaries (I had done a good deal of maneuvering in general). JFK did move around the state a lot in preparing that fight, and was quite effective, though I never had the impression that it was a terribly tough fight. JFK had tremendous prestige and other advantages; Onion Burke was neither adept nor popular, and McCormack did not have strong statewide strength.

The most exciting episode at the convention was of course the vice presidential fight. It was one of the few times I can remember at a convention when the delegates felt that they were making a decision, and the suspense was high. For some reason or other I was not geared into the fight, what

there was of it. This was partly because it happened so fast, and partly because there wasn't much I could do anyway. After the convention Jan and I happened to run into JFK behind the convention hall. He for once didn't seem to be headed anywhere special; we had a chance to talk. He did not seem very depressed by the defeat; but he looked somewhat deflated and uncertain. Slightly nonplussed is perhaps the better description. Of course he must have known already that his concession speech had made a big hit.

I ran for Congress in 1958 at the same time he ran again for the Senate. It was clear from the start that I would have to hold tight to his coattails, and he was more generous than most other candidates would have been. When I was fighting Stapleton and the McCarthyites in the primary, I was able to use some comments he had made about Roosevelt: The Lion and The Fox in an advertisement in such a way to make it seem almost a campaign endorsement. His office fully cooperated on this and raised no objection; Sorensen may even have suggested the idea, or at least hinted at it. During the campaign I went to Boston and he and I made a short TV film together. It was professionally done and paid for by him; he also slipped me \$500 after the filming. I had a



prepared script which made a nice human-interest reference to Jackie; he took that out without comment, but perhaps mainly to save time. It was a strictly businesslike exchange on the issues, as much as time allowed. When he came out to this district he was nice about letting me campaign closely with him, though I had to take the initiative. Of course he attracted all the attention; already he was showing that great campaign appeal.

Shortly after I was defeated, Ted Sorensen talked with me about working in Kennedy's office. I was flattered but otherwise not too responsive. Instead I suggested that I write a biography of the Senator. I will not go into detail about this as it is all covered in the correspondence that I will eventually deposit in the Library. I might say here that one problem was that Ted Sorensen indicated that I would be working for him and while I liked Ted, I was not too happy about this as an arrangement, as I would have of course preferred direct access to JFK. Of course I realized that eventually I would be working for JFK as much as he and I wanted; in fact it was clear to me then that I was rejecting a tremendous opportunity, but there were compelling personal, family and other reasons why I did not accept.

I have described the writing of the book in the book itself. I want to repeat here that JFK and his office did live up to their commitments. I even worked in the Senate office at night when I could get into files without embarrassment. Of course there were still difficulties, for I could not go rummaging through peoples' desks, but I did get fairly freely into files and into material in JFK's own office, as by prior agreement. I did some interviews and the transcriptions will be available to the Library.

Most memorable was the long interview I conducted at Hyannis Port in the summer of 1959. It was a beautiful day. JFK greeted me, we talked some, then I produced my tape recorder and he and I spent some time scouting around the front porch for an outlet, finding a quiet place, etc. We were pleasantly interrupted by Jackie and the baby (Caroline), but that is all on the tape. JFK went swimming; he asked if I would like to swim too but I had no suit, etc., so went down with him and watched from the beach. He didn't stay in long, but swam well and got some exercise. The operation cut in his back was hardly visible, but I think he did have some kind of small brace -- I am not sure.

I decided to send the manuscript to the Kennedy office

on my own initiative. I had some quick responses: notably a lovely but unhappy letter from Jacqueline, and a long rambling phone call from Joe, Sr. -- rather pleasant but steadily coming around to a criticism of the manuscript. Several weeks later, when the book was about to go into galley, I had a call from Sorensen. He said that he and JFK were campaigning out west -- this was around October 1959 -- that they had read the manuscript on the way out, and that JFK wanted him to tell me that if the manuscript came out the way it was, they felt it would be a catastrophe for the campaign -- he used that phrase or one equally strong. He seemed genuinely upset. I suggested that we get together and talk about it. He was even willing to come to Williams-town but I said that he shouldn't take time from the campaign. About a week later, the morning after the Al Smith dinner, we met in a lobby of the Waldorf Astoria. For at least four solid hours without interruption we went over the manuscript. Most of his criticisms were in writing -- also from JFK -- and this will be deposited some day too. He was still terribly upset, and JFK's critique was about as strongly worded as anything I have ever seen from him.

While I eventually had a very nice letter from JFK (in February 1960, I think), our relations never seemed very

close after that, perhaps for reasons that had nothing to do with the book or even me -- just the pressure of the campaign, etc. Yet somehow I felt that I had lost his confidence to a degree -- the man JMB (James M. Burns) who had been a stalwart politically had turned out to be neutralist academically or professionally. However, he was always personally very responsive and obliging. For example, I wanted the children to meet him after all the writing about him, etc., and he invited us to his office in the spring of '60; he wasn't feeling too well the day we were there so it was shifted to his house. The kids were much impressed because he met us at the door, and we had a nice half hour, he acting as host. Jackie came in in riding clothes and was cordial but stayed only a minute.

I had practically no contact with JFK during the campaign but of course did a lot of campaigning myself. I joined the group under Bob Kennedy at the convention and attended the famous daily meetings along with Galbraith and various others, but I had no special role. I also was upset at the LBJ decision, and went around the convention floor trying to find out what various delegations were going to do. I may have said something to a reporter; in any event,

at one point when I rejoined the Massachusetts delegation on the floor McCormack was talking about "that son of a bitch" opposing Johnson -- meaning me. But I told him that I was supporting the nomination and this rather deflated him. Incidentally, earlier in the year I had made a contribution to the Kennedy campaign out of my royalties -- \$1000.

After the election the open Senate appointment seemed up for grabs and I wanted to see JFK for that and other reasons. The New York Times also had asked me to do a story. JFK wrote me a very nice letter which opened up the chance to see him. I saw him late in November 1960 when he was still announcing cabinet appointments. There was a crowd in front of the little house. I have described much of this in my piece in the New Statesman (attached) so will not repeat here, except for my own conversation with him. When I was ushered in by Mrs. Lincoln; Abe Ribicoff and Salinger were there. Kennedy was sitting in the corner, using the telephone, talking desultorily with the others, and leafing through a newspaper on the floor at his feet. He was cordial. As usual he was racing through a lot of things at the same time. He was also trying to get Senator Dodd on the phone in Paris to announce to him, as a courtesy, the Ribicoff

appointment, but he couldn't get Dodd. During a lull I said to JFK that Abe Ribicoff had really tested me one night at his house when he had had Miss Israeli and me both stay overnight, and Miss Israeli had a room right across from mine in a kind of wing of the house. Ribicoff said: "That's right, and what the hell did you do about it?" JFK seemed amused by this, but of course he's not the guffawing type. At one point JFK and Salinger and Ribicoff left the room; meantime Udall had come in and I chatted with him. He said that he practically had the Interior Secretaryship but that Senator [Clinton P.] Anderson wanted the job and he was afraid Anderson would spike him. Shortly JFK returned. He asked me how much time I wanted -- he could ask this kind of question in so pleasant and businesslike way that he gave no offense. I said eight or ten minutes. He nodded and led me up a narrow flight of stairs to a very small room, like a sewing room, which I think Mrs. Lincoln was using. I said to him that I thought he ought to be the Jefferson of the Twentieth Century -- not quite that pretentiously -- and I urged him to start right away working for a strong Congress in 1962 by helping get good guys elected, etc. (my ideas are submitted on a separate document). He indicated

to me that he thought the Democratic Party platform had been an albatross or millstone during the campaign -- he didn't use those words but that was the point. He said it to me almost accusingly. I said that I would not go into details but would send him a memo. He seemed interested but was noncommittal.

Then I shifted the subject and said that I too had a gleam in my eye about the Senate vacancy. I said that I was probably 255th on the totem pole but would put my bid in anyway. He said right away, and with apparent sincerity, "No, Jim, I think you're third or fourth on the list." He said that he owed it to Torby MacDonald, and I gathered that Sheriff Fitzpatrick came after MacDonald. Anyway, he handled all this so well, and I was so pleased at my high rating, that I had to remind myself that third or fourth was not necessarily better than 255th. But since I hoped that the frontrunners might kill one another off, I was pleased. He added that he would be glad to support me and would like "to have me down here." He then talked generally about his situation, said that he had to consolidate his position with the country through his appointments. He said that he didn't want to make any that "will sink me." On way down stairs I said that

I would like to help out on a non-paid basis and he nodded agreement, or seemed to. He told Mrs. Lincoln to see that I saw him any time I wanted. He had already agreed to see me in Palm Beach in December.

I flew down in late December. I have also described the surroundings at Palm Beach in the New Statesman article. He came downstairs, greeted me with his usual cheeriness, and introduced me to LBJ and Mrs. LBJ. Then we went outside, and while the LBJs sat around the pool, JFK stripped off his shirt, led me over to a protected corner, and talked. My Times article of January 1961 was an outgrowth of this interview. Midway in the discussion Mrs. Lincoln called him in to a phone call. He said to me as he left: "That's our friend Foster (Furcolo) with an indictable proposition." Since I knew this dealt with the Senate job (still not filled), I wanted to be all ears but nobly desisted. I heard JFK talking rather vigorously over the phone; he came back and said that Furcolo on behalf of himself and two other politicians were advancing a package program under which Furcolo would get a judgeship, as I recall, a second man would get something opened up in Massachusetts (the governorship?), and Eddie McCormack would get the Senate job. This



is the best that I can recall; it was notable mainly for the elaborate ploy it involved -- everybody getting something from it. JFK indicated that he would have nothing to do with it (and he evidently didn't).

I saw JFK next about a year later, when I was working on another piece for the Times (attached). Unfortunately I took only scattered notes on this meeting. I was ushered into the Oval Room by Ken O'Donnell; JFK greeted me warmly -- pleasantly but not gushingly, of course. He was still talking with Dick Goodwin and one or two others. He talked with Goodwin mainly about his imminent trip to South America. I remember particularly that JFK questioned Goodwin about security arrangements. He asked whether the crowds would be moving and whether they could be kept back. He asked what about Jackie, but seemed to think she would not be in any danger. He asked whether he would have the bubble top. He was also asking about Jackie's speech, whether it would be on TV, etc. All this he went through in a rather matter-of-fact tone, as though he were making arrangements for dinner. He seemed a bit concerned but only from an operational standpoint.

Once again I talked with JFK about Congress. His

reaction was the same as usual -- interested and concerned but not very responsive to what I suggested (in the memo -- I think it was this time that I left a really developed memo). He felt that they should do more recruiting and mentioned Connally's going back to Texas as a good example of what they should do more of. But on the main points he didn't respond too much. He seemed more interested in talking about foreign and executive problems -- the need to pick good men, etc. Of course this was not too long after the Bay of Pigs, and he raised that subject. His main point was that he had discovered that you could not trust men down the line to do the job, that he now had to go over every item of a plan to be sure it was being done right, etc. He also made this point about the Congo -- which was exploding about that time.

The last time I saw JFK intimately was a year later, in December 1962. JFK was tied up with Representative Mills a lot that day so my appointment was postponed until later in the day. When I finally went in about 6:30 Mills (and I believe) Sorensen were just leaving. JFK had come out previously to shake hands and then disappeared. We had hardly sat down -- he in the rocker and I on the sofa -- when he got up, asked me if I would like to come to the

White House Christmas party for the staff, and led me hurriedly through Mrs. Lincoln's office, along the portico, and into the basement or the first floor of the Mansion. As we entered the long, brightly lighted corridor a Marine detachment waiting there sounded a flourish of trumpets. Very intoxicating. We went to the elevator, got off on the family floor. He asked me to wait there in the large hall. A few moments after he went in one door, Jackie, looking beautiful in a red dress, came out of another, like Box and Cox, and began calling "Jack" rather loudly like any wife whose husband is back from work and hiding around the house somewhere. She greeted me cordially and then went in the same door that he had gone in. A few minutes later they reappeared, this time with her sister, Princess Lee Radziwell. I went down with them in the elevator. On the way down JFK asked me if I was "exposing any more judges" lately. He said that everyone knows about buying judgeships but it's hard to prove it. He said this in a bantering tone. After we left the elevator the Kennedys mingled with the guests for half an hour, while I stood by watching with interest. (JFK had told me to stand by.) They did this social business seemingly very easily, greeting guests informally as people

moved about. Everything was very Christmasy and beautiful, and of course there was a band. Then he picked me up, we went back into the elevator, which took him and me down before taking Jackie up. As I left the elevator I wished her Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, and as I looked back I saw an almost ethereal look on her face; she responded to me but seemed to be looking up over my head at something that I could not see -- not really looking at anything. Just an odd memory.

Back in his Oval Office, JFK sat me down on the sofa again. He went over and grabbed a cane, which he waved around, and squinted along as he talked. The subject was mainly political and congressional -- part of this interview supplied material for The Deadlock of Democracy. I stuck to my usual line about building up the party, etc., mentioning also a resolution that had been passed by the American Political Science Association, and he gave the usual non-committal answers. He said that the main problem was the South. It was too bad to lose a few districts in the North, but the South was the main problem. I again urged basic party and electoral planning; he said that they were working on registration and finance. He was cautious about his

intervening in primaries because of possible charges of outside interference. I said that I was a professional worrier about what happened to Presidents in their second terms. He responded, saying that Ike had not had too much trouble. I said that Ike hadn't been trying to get through a big program. He agreed and then returned to the problem of the South. I said that I would be happy to help out on any planning activity, but he was not very responsive to that. He seemed only marginally interested in the whole problem. He talked about the reactionary press. He said that FDR's big mistake was letting them get radio (and TV) licenses. Luce had made money out of TV, poured it into his magazines. He returned to the South. "If only we didn't have this Southern problem...." He talked about the possibility of starting a bonfire after 1964. Let some Southern congressmen get knocked off by Republicans; then build afresh with good Democrats. He agreed with my point that it was much better to try to elect good guys then purge bad guys.

On the way out he asked what I was writing -- I said The Deadlock of Democracy, adding that the title pertained to the history. He left me in Mrs. Lincoln's office, where I chatted with her. While I was putting on my coat he came

back in and seemed still in a conversational mood (by now it must have been at least eight). I mentioned that I was going to Russia to lecture on American history and would he have any advice. He seemed to come alive again and said, yes, that I should emphasize the domestic side, regulatory commissions, etc., and thus correct their 50-year-old and thus dated conception of American capitalism. What interested me was that as soon as I threw a problem at him at this late hour, he seemed to come alive and he had very good advice to give, as it turned out.

The last time I saw JFK (at a distance) was when my wife and I went to the big dinner in the Boston Armory in about October 1963. The affair was notable for two things: JFK came in through a great nondescript crowd and security seemed at a minimum. He came through a side door and along at least 200 yards of corridor separated from people by only a rope or flimsy fence. Also, Ted Kennedy spoke there and the kidding relation between the two in their speeches was genuinely funny.

I will not conclude this with any attempt at general evaluation. I have done a good deal of this in various interviews and articles, as attached. However, there is one

facet of JFK in which I have long been interested and which has led to some discussion. I have always felt very positively toward him -- it was because I sensed the potential greatness in him that I did the biography. However, his idolators -- some of them -- are still upset because I raised the question of how much basic commitment there was in him. As I said many times, I felt during his presidency that he was moving steadily toward a deeper political and intellectual commitment to his program, but that I was not sure of his emotional or "heart" commitment. This too has led to many questions on the part of reporters, especially upon JFK's death. Part of the trouble is that I never spelled out my feeling on this matter fully, partly because I was not able to define the situation very well. Also, JFK's close friends -- some of them -- hate to see any failing imputed to him -- if indeed this is a failing; I'm not even sure of that. I'll make just two points here. (1) I always felt that there was little emotional sentiment in him. He as much as said this to me. He seemed almost to be reacting against the over-sentimentality of his grandfather Fitz. I doubt that he was easily moved to tears, and I think he would have been ashamed to show tears. (2) (This may relate indirectly to

the first point.) I felt that JFK would never go all-out on a political gamble. I really doubt that he would have done what his heroes in Profiles in Courage did. (I neglected to mention above that one of my earliest ties with him was helping a bit on Profiles -- but I dealt mainly with Sorensen and did not do a great deal anyway.) I don't think he would have felt any one incident important enough to justify putting all his political money on it. This may be good presidential politics, as a President has such a wide gambit to cover. Probably he had commitment but of a different sort. I felt that he could never throw himself into some cause blindly; there would always be part of him sitting back and watching with some detachment. His wit reflected this lack of passion. Again, these may be good qualities -- it is better that a President does not allow the heart to rule the head. God knows he made enough of a commitment in the end.

I could say much more but will conclude this, at least for the time being, by saying that he was one of the finest persons I have ever known -- engaging, intellectually responsive, simple, direct, remarkably frank, and always very human.

*Harold S. [unclear]*



## John Kennedy and his Spectators

The Kennedy build-up goes on. The adjectives tumble over one another. He is not only the handsomest, the best dressed, the most articulate and graceful as a gazelle. He is omniscient; he swallows and digests whole books in minutes; his eye seizes instantly on the crucial point of a long memorandum; he confounds experts with his superior knowledge of their field. He is omnipresent; no sleepy staff committee can be sure that he will not telephone - or pop in; every host at a party can hope that he will. He is omnipotent; he personally bosses and spurs the whole shop; he has no need of Ike's staff apparatus; he is more than a lion, more than a fox. He's Superman!

Is this over-compensation for wrongs done to Kennedy in the past? I remember people looking at me incredulously when I argued that he had the makings of a great President. He was so young, immature, on-the-make. He would be run by the Pope, or by his father, or by his staff. He just didn't look like a President. Someone quoted Lincoln to me - would anything Kennedy said be remembered a century later? That was about a year before the Inaugural.

Now the build-up is at full throttle, aided, let us admit, by the excellent press-agentry of a politically-astute staff. It's an old American custom. Besides, Mr. Kennedy deserves it. Why be concerned? For three reasons.

For one thing, the build-up is too indiscriminate. Take the question of the way the President has organized his Administration. We hear much about his method of direct command, his distaste for bland and watery committee reports, his omnivorous reading, his accessibility. All this is desirable, and certainly refreshing after Eisenhower. But the point is that there is *no* ideal way to organize the White House. Every system has its drawbacks. FDR accomplished a great deal by personal command; but there was another side to the story - tangled lines of communication, wasted energy, the dissipation of a sense of direction. Moreover, Kennedy's main problem is not administrative, but political. His troubles are not in the Executive; they are in Congress and the Democratic Party.

Secondly, the build-up will not last. The public can be cruel, and so can the press. Behind the peoples' adulation for the President is a partiality for seeing the pendulum swing - and they will give it a shove. The swing will be all the stronger because of the intensity of the build-up. Americans build their triumphal arches out of brick, Mr. Dooley said, so as to have missiles handy when their heroes have fallen. Harry Truman enjoyed a burst of sympathy when he took office; then people turned against him savagely;

then the pendulum swung back in his favor after his surprise defeat of Dewey; and then it again swung heavily against him.

The same journals that are giving Kennedy such uncritical acclaim now will be among the first to turn on him when his momentum slackens, or when people grow bored. I can see their lead sentences now: "The Kennedy Administration was first carried forward in a tidal wave of enthusiasm. For a while it seemed he was the answer to the nation's prayers. But it could not last, hopes are fading, the problems remain, the Administration falters. . . ."

Finally, and most important by far, the build-up nourishes one of our worst political vices - watching instead of doing. Across the nation people smilingly approve the President's latest appearance on television, then switch off their sets - and their minds - as though they were as little involved with him as they are with Ed Sullivan. Watching the President perform has become the great spectator sport of 1961. If present adulation could be translated into practical support on Capitol Hill, all would be well for the Kennedy programs. But there is no such alchemy. One reason Congress fails to respond to his invitation to occupy the New Frontier is that there is so little general *pressure* for it; Kennedy is expected to do it himself. Superman does.

The "hundred days" theory was never applicable. Indeed, the idea is a positive danger. Drastic action did come during FDR's first few months, and the precedent leads us to assume Mr. Kennedy should be able to pull the same rabbits out of the same hat. But the situation is different; Kennedy must mobilize national strength in all fields, month after month, in 1963 and 1964 as well as this year and next. As he comes to grips with his opposition in Congress, his foes will obscure the issues. The mass media will grow tired of Caroline and White House decoration and will turn to new fancies. When the Administration may need support the most to carry programs through Congress, it may not have it, because Superman's spectators never left their seats and got around to organizing their support.

Our greatest protection against the let-down that follows the build-up is Kennedy himself. He is too self-possessed and dispassionate to be as carried away as the slicks and the spectators. So, I think, is his staff. One of the best statements since the Inaugural is credited to McGeorge Bundy: "At this point," he said, "we are like the Harlem Globetrotters, passing forward, behind, sideways and underneath. But nobody has made a basket yet."

JAMES MACGREGOR BURNS

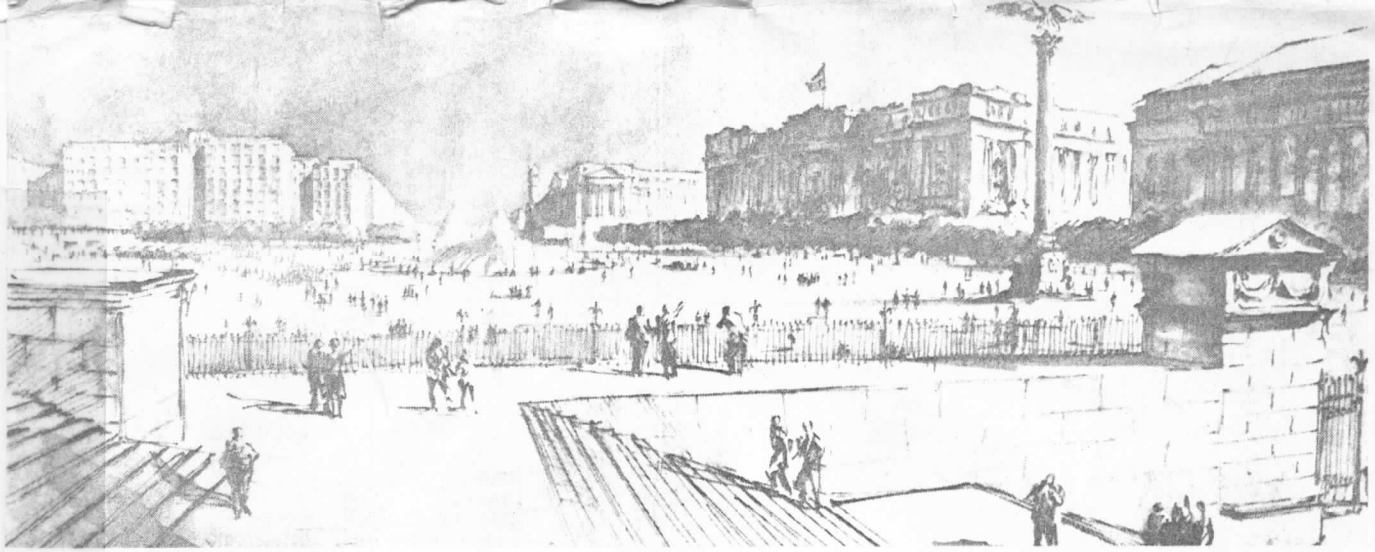


Illustration: Fine Arts Commission

Grand design for Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington was a Kennedy dream that is left for others to finish. Drawing shows how it is to appear from Treasury terrace, looking toward the Capitol. Final plans soon will be submitted to President Johnson.



—USN&WR Photo

Kennedy half dollars now number 146 million, but they still are scarce. People save them as souvenirs.



—UPI Photo

Impact of the Kennedys on the White House was memorable. The mansion became a showcase for culture and the arts as artists and writers were entertained at glittering parties. Above, the Kennedys with novelist Pearl Buck and poet Robert Frost.

credit for putting through the 11-billion-dollar cut in taxes that was finally voted in 1964. Mr. Johnson, too, will get much of the credit for inducing Congress to pass another Kennedy proposal—a law greatly strengthening federal enforcement of Negro rights.

Still another Kennedy idea—a national system of hospital care for retired persons—is expected to be pushed through Congress in some form next year, and it again will be President Johnson who will reap most of the political credit for that action.

**Cultural "tone" in office.** President Kennedy will be remembered for building a Cabinet of strong people and for bringing many young people of outstanding ability into Government service.

Associates of the former President refer often to the "style" and "tone" that he brought to the office of President—a high standard of intellect and culture. Many of his close advisers and associates were professors.

Mr. Kennedy had a wide range of interests, and many of those interests brought results that will leave a lasting imprint on the nation and its capital.

Urban renewal was encouraged by the late President. So was progress in architecture. He took a personal hand in planning improvements for Washington, D. C. As a result of his efforts, Lafayette Square and its surrounding area near the White House are gaining dignity and beauty. Pennsylvania Avenue, running from the White House to the Capitol,

is marked for conversion into a truly "national" avenue in a Kennedy pattern.

The White House, when occupied by the Kennedys, sparkled with gaiety, culture and style. World-famous artists were brought in to perform. White House parties acquired a new glamour.

Jacqueline Kennedy, the late President's young and beautiful wife, played an important role in all this. Her tasteful redecoration has left the White House with new beauty.

**Honored in death.** Today, a year after Mr. Kennedy's death, the nation's memory of him remains vivid. He has been honored all over the world in monuments, memorials, new place names, stamps and coins. Thousands of people still file past his grave in Arlington National Cemetery. His widow and their two children attract attention wherever they go.

The bright image of a young President fades slowly, even in a fast-changing world.

Now, the Johnson idea of a "Great Society" is replacing the Kennedy challenge of a New Frontier. New answers are being sought for new problems, at home and abroad.

It remains for historians—and future developments—to determine the effect that President Kennedy's brief career in the White House has had on the world, and how the name of John F. Kennedy will go down in history.

*A historian assesses John F. Kennedy, page 64.*



—Capa-Magnum Photo

"Kennedy made himself, as President, unforgettable." In dramatizing major issues, his name "will be as effective as Roosevelt's . . . and Lincoln's."

**James MacGregor Burns** for many years knew John F. Kennedy as man and politician. A recognized authority on the Presidency and U. S. politics, Professor Burns won wide acclaim for his biographies of Mr. Kennedy and Franklin D. Roosevelt. Now he is writing another book, to be published next year, which will deal with presidential leadership.

## PRESIDENT KENNEDY'S PLACE IN HISTORY—A NEW SIZE-UP

Exclusive Interview With James MacGregor Burns,  
Kennedy's Biographer, Professor of History at Williams College

One year after his death, John F. Kennedy's legacy to the nation is being widely debated by politicians and historians.

Few occupants of the White House studied the Presidency as he did. It was his ambition to become known as a great President.

To what extent did he succeed—or fail?

Could President Kennedy have won the huge vote piled up this year by his successor?

Does either of his younger brothers have the same qualities that led him to the White House?

For answers, "U. S. News & World Report" interviewed James MacGregor Burns, a close student of the career of the late President.

**Q** Professor Burns, now that Lyndon Johnson is elected President in his own right, will the image of John F. Kennedy tend to fade in this country?

**A** No, I don't think so.

**Q** Why?

**A** I think in his nearly three years President Kennedy made such an impact on people's thinking about the Presidency that his image is ineradicable. And the very fact that President Johnson has picked up the Kennedy program and gone ahead with it will keep the Kennedy program very much before us. In fact, it was Kennedy's capacity to articulate the program that has helped make the program possible, and he did it so brilliantly that I think it will stay with us for a long time.

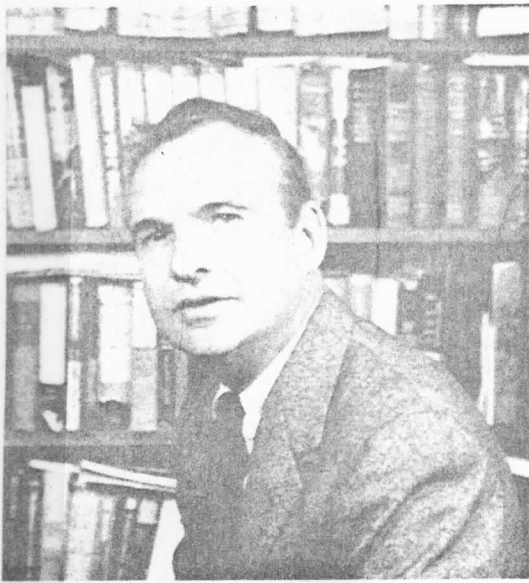
What I'm saying is that both Kennedy's image as a person, as a President, and his impact as formulator of policy will be with us for a long time.

**Q** Have there been any other Presidents who left a legacy quite of that nature?

**A** Yes. Franklin D. Roosevelt did, and certainly Woodrow Wilson did with his League of Nations effort, which, I think, is quite relevant. Here was a great project that did not go through, but Wilson articulated it so brilliantly and so tragically that the issue of the League of Nations came back to us 20 years later. In fact, it never left us as a hope and a challenge.

**Q** Was a major part of Kennedy's legacy that he got the people interested in the Presidency itself, in contrast with the President as a person?

**A** I think he did both. He couldn't help being interesting as a President, but he also had ideas about the Presidency and what shape it should take. Therefore I would say he made himself, as President, unforgettable and he made the Presidency a more exciting institution by showing how the



—Paul LePlante Photo



—USN&WR Photo

*"Johnson has worked out the Presidency in his own terms and hasn't tried to emulate Kennedy."*

esidency could be related to virtually every important phase of American life.

**Q** Will historians attach a great deal of importance to the fact that John Kennedy was the first Catholic to be President?

**A** I think his breaking the anti-Catholic tradition, or the non-Catholic tradition, of the American Presidency will be very important. That removed the issue completely from American national politics.

It's rather interesting to realize that that issue was removed by hardly more than 100,000 votes—whatever that difference was. But I think this was one of the great benefits of his Presidency—and if he had failed, that issue would still be haunting us in this country.

## KENNEDY'S "LIBERALISM"—

**Q** How are historians likely to identify him? As a "liberal" or a "conservative"?

**A** I think they will place him in the liberal tradition in two ways: First, they will note his willingness to use government, especially the Federal Government, for redistributing welfare. Secondly, they will note a more qualitative type of liberalism that he espoused—that is, his use of the Federal government to improve the quality of American life through emphasis on education, recreation, conservation, the arts, making our cities less ugly.

**Q** What will he be remembered for in the foreign field?

**A** I think this depends largely on future events. If we press ahead on disarmament and accommodation with the Soviet Union, the test-ban treaty will be the striking achievement of his Administration. This will have been such a dramatic and controversial turning point that, if the treaty is followed up by other measures, it will be the decisive feature of his foreign policy.

**Q** Will his handling of the Cuba missile crisis overcome the defeat at the Bay of Pigs?

**A** Well, the missile crisis plus a number of his other foreign-policy activities, I think, will accomplish that. But, in general, Presidents are expected these days to manage to cope with specific problems. Most Presidents have the equipment and the talent in the White House and throughout the whole Foreign Service to cope quite effectively with a crisis.

So I think the real test of a Presidency now is not coping with immediate crises, even though that, of course, is vitally necessary,

but in creating fresh approaches—the kind of great, new direction that I think was symbolized in the test-ban treaty.

**Q** Is two years and 10 months too short a time for any President to make a lasting imprint?

**A** Not in Kennedy's case. I think he moved quite quickly to make the kind of imprint he did. It was too early for him to realize many of his legislative goals. But he had a tremendous impact on popular attitudes because, again, he articulated those goals so well.

**Q** Do you think he would have done as well as President Johnson has in pushing through his legislative program?

**A** I think he would have in his second term—that is, assuming that he would have won a large victory this year. I wouldn't try to compare that victory with President Johnson's because that is too conjectural. But I do believe that things would have been going for John Kennedy as they indeed did go for Lyndon Johnson, and that during a second term he would have moved ahead on the program.

I don't think he would have had such a successful 1964 with Congress as Johnson did.

## "GREAT WAVE OF FEELING"—

**Q** Why is that? Was it lack of experience?

**A** No, I don't think it's a matter of experience. I think, for one thing, Kennedy's death unleashed a great wave of feeling for him and this was carried over to his program. I believe that President Johnson, aside from his own skill in handling Congress, did benefit from that feeling about Kennedy.

Now, obviously, Kennedy, if alive, would not have had that emotional factor going for him in 1964. But I do believe that the forces piling up in the civil-rights area, for instance, were so strong that, after all the delay in getting through an effective civil-rights bill, it would have been passed in 1965 or 1966, even if it hadn't come under Kennedy in 1964.

**Q** Is it your feeling then that President Kennedy, had he lived, would have won rather decisively this year?

**A** Yes.

**Q** Do you think that John Kennedy had something that others as Presidents have not had?

**A** I think he had two things: a tremendous "activism"

## ... "Lyndon Johnson has accepted the Kennedy program"

that led him into, as I said earlier, every phase of American life; and, secondly, a broad purpose—so that, even though he moved along such a wide front, there was always a long-term direction in what he was doing.

**Q** Was he able, do you think, to work out the means, as well as the ends?

**A** I don't think he had been able to work out all his political means in the time he had. His great hope by November of 1963 was to win in 1964 with such a mandate and with such a strengthening of his position in Congress that he could move ahead on his program in 1965.

I think he was very conscious of the slim margin with which he won in 1960, and of the slim margin of his real policy support, especially in the House of Representatives. And I'm sure he was looking forward to the 1964 elections to resolve that problem.

**Q** You spoke of the great feeling that people have toward President Kennedy and his program. Is that a reasoned support for his ideas, or is it mainly emotional feeling for his personality?

**A** It's both. It's very hard to separate the two, just as it was during Roosevelt's time. It was a combination of a long-term growth of support for welfare programs of the Democratic Party and of the moderate Republicans over the years, which Kennedy exemplified, along with a tremendous feeling for the man himself.

## AHEAD FOR THE BROTHERS—

**Q** Will emotional response have political significance from now on? Can Robert Kennedy continue to benefit from this, as he seems to have done in his senatorial campaign in New York?

**A** Well, even aside from Senator Robert Kennedy or Senator Ted Kennedy, the feeling would be kept alive because politicians will always point to great figures who symbolized or dramatized or articulated major issues, and President Kennedy's name will be as effective on this score—partly because he died in office—as Roosevelt's name has been for New Deal issues and Lincoln's is for the Republican Party—and, of course, those two Presidents died in office also.

In short, there is a major "martyr element" which will continue to play a role in American politics in years to come.

**Q** Looking at the two Senator Kennedys, does either seem a likely successor to John F. Kennedy?

**A** I think it's much too early to tell this. Both of them are highly talented, imaginative, hard-driving political leaders. I don't think either of them is wholly like the older brother. Ted Kennedy has John's tremendously winning qualities; Robert Kennedy has his brother's tenacity and hard-headedness.

I'm not sure at this time that either brother combines all the qualities of the late President, but each has an arresting set of personal qualities of his own.

**Q** Do both have the potential to climb even higher?

**A** Very much so.

**Q** Could conditions become ripe in the next couple of years for growth of what you might call a "Kennedy wing" within the Democratic Party, led by Robert and his younger brother?

**A** Well, I assume the Kennedys will be potent factors. They always have been, and one would expect this of them. But I don't see the kind of factionalism ahead that some have predicted, because there is no great policy difference between the Kennedy supporters in the Democratic Party and the

supporters of other outstanding leaders, such as Hubert Humphrey or the President himself.

It's not as though the Democratic Party had the kind of policy differences that now face the Republican Party. It's possible that policy differences would develop, but I see little likelihood of that in view of present agreement on public policy.

**Q** Does history show that weak opposition, such as the Republicans seem to be now, often leads to a critical split in the majority party?

**A** Yes, I think excessive weakness in one party always produces dangers also for the other party in a two-party system. The present imbalance between the two parties will have to be corrected very quickly. The Democratic Party will show great internal cleavages if it goes on too many years with such a huge amount of consensus support.

**Q** In that situation then, would the Kennedys assume very real importance?

**A** Yes. But I think you could point to other leaders who will be important, too. It's a big party. There will be room for many leaders. Obviously, in all large parties, there are ambitious men whose paths of ambition may meet and collide, but also big parties have many rewards to offer over the years. It is still very early to predict a disruptive situation developing within the party involving the President and the Kennedys, or any other leaders.

**Q** If John Kennedy had lived, would his policies or goals have differed from Lyndon Johnson's?

**A** No, I don't think so. I think there's been a tremendous continuity there. A lot will depend on the new policies that Lyndon Johnson presents in the coming years, but my guess would be that, since he has accepted so wholly the Kennedy program and has enlisted so many of the talented people that President Kennedy had working for him for his own program, there will continue to be great continuity between the two programs.

**Q** How would you say the two men differ as President in their style?

**A** It's hard to answer that question without just saying the obvious. There was always a highly intellectual quality to Kennedy's Presidency. He was not just interested in policy, but the background of policy. He was interested in why his advisers made the recommendations they did. He liked to rummage back into their own thinking. He had an almost academic interest in the roots of policy.

I think Lyndon Johnson is somewhat more operational, somewhat more interested in driving ahead, in taking issues for their immediate social and economic benefit—not working over and worrying the issue so much, but trying to move ahead as quickly as he can.

**Q** Do the two men run the office differently?

**A** I don't know enough about Lyndon Johnson's actual working of the office. All I can say is that, in spending some time at the White House earlier this year, I was much more impressed by the continuities of the management of the White House since Kennedy's days than I was by any changes.

## JOHNSON AND FDR—

**Q** Do you think that Lyndon Johnson has taken on any of the coloration of his predecessor in his thinking?

**A** No, I think Johnson has worked out the Presidency in his own terms and hasn't tried to emulate Kennedy. If there's any emulation, it would be more of Franklin D. Roosevelt.

[END]

# A SIZE-UP OF KENNEDY

## An Interview With His Biographer JAMES MacGREGOR BURNS

Kennedy in the White House will be far different from Kennedy on the campaign trail. This exclusive interview with a man who has studied Mr. Kennedy closely—his authorized biographer—presents an intimate, objective portrait of the President-elect.

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At WILLIAMSTOWN, Mass.

**Q** Professor Burns, what sort of President will Senator Kennedy make?

**A** First of all, I should point out that I am not in Mr. Kennedy's inner circle. I am just a long-time observer. To answer your question: People are going to be aware right away that here is a strong person, a man who takes command with assurance, who decides what he wants, then goes after it with all the powers at his disposal.

There will be a great deal of activity in the White House. President-elect Kennedy is the kind of man who keeps moving. As he sees it, you can't stand still—you have to keep moving. Also, he has a definite concept of the Presidency.

He believes that a President must be not only Chief Executive but also a strong legislative leader, with a definite program that he expects Congress to pass. He will be a strong party leader, and a strong chief of state in making clear his position to the nation and the world.

**Q** What are some of the personal qualities that Mr. Kennedy will bring to bear on the Presidency?

**A** The President-elect is a well-educated and well-read man with a wide range of interests, and a high degree of intellectual curiosity. He asks questions—lots of questions—about all kinds of things. He is, I suppose, a sophisticated man able to adapt to all kinds of persons and situations he is dealing with. He has an inner confidence.

Of course, he is upset when things go wrong. But he doesn't brood over it. He moves ahead quickly and aggressively. He just doesn't think things should go wrong. He figures there must be some key to the problem, and he starts looking for it. He doesn't lose any time over spilled milk. He hunts restlessly for some other way to tackle the thing.

Nor does he agonize over decisions. To him, I think, a decision is not so much a matter of anguish as a problem of acquiring a great deal of information, and, above all, moving ahead as quickly as possible.

**Q** Would you say that Mr. Kennedy is bold and daring?

**A** That has to be answered in two ways. He can be bold where boldness is required. But he is also a traditionalist, by which I mean that he believes strongly in constitutional procedures. And his habit is to analyze thoroughly before making his decision, prepare carefully before making his move. Also, as I have said, he is a pragmatist and a realist—he is interested in things that work.

This "shoot from the hip" talk about him arose during the campaign when he was under tremendous pressure every day to answer his opponent or take some position as he moved frenetically from one rally to another.

In the Presidency, I doubt that there will be any "shooting from the hip." In the Presidency, he can wait before coming to a conclusion, and I would expect him to do so.

I say this on the basis of what he has been like in the actual exercise of responsibility in the past. For example, his speech on Algeria, which was a very bold statement, was not concocted overnight. [Mr. Kennedy made a speech critical of France in the Senate on July 8, 1957.] It was given after a great deal of careful study.

I don't think you can generalize enough to call him a "radical," a "moderate" or a "conservative." The only generalization I would offer is that he is an "activist," that his response is an action response. But this man does not follow intuition or hunches. He does an enormous amount of analyzing and preparation for his major moves.

**Q** What are his working habits?

James MacGregor Burns is a professor at Williams College, a historian and a prize-winning biographer. In preparing for his biography of Senator Kennedy, Professor Burns had complete access to the next President's records, spent many hours talking with him, his friends and his opponents, as well as with members of the Kennedy family.

—Paul LaPlante



...his own elec-

### As Mr. Burns Sees Him

"Here is a strong person, a man who decides what he wants, then goes after it with all the powers at his disposal."



-USN&WR Photos

"President-elect Kennedy believes that a President must be not only Chief Executive but also a strong legislative leader, with a definite program" for Congress to pass.



"Kennedy is tireless. He will work day and night if necessary to keep on top of every situation. He wants to understand thoroughly what the problems are before deciding what should be done."



The Senator "is no back-slapper, and I don't think he likes his own back slapped. His really close friends go back to his earlier years."



Mr. Kennedy's humor is "a quick, dry wit directed at himself more than anyone else."



A Kennedy is tireless. He will work day and night if necessary to keep on top of every situation as it arises. He wants to understand thoroughly what the problems are before deciding what should be done.

Of course, he takes vacations, but I don't think he ever gets away from the business of politics. When he is at the White House, this is going to be a 16-hour-a-day job for him—and more, if he thinks it necessary on occasion.

It is worth mentioning that he does have a sense of humor, and I think it comes out particularly in moments of tension and stress. He is not one to go in for boisterous, back-slapping humor or long, funny stories. His is a quick, dry, slightly sardonic wit which may be directed at himself more than anyone else.

**Q Is he cold and aloof?**  
**A** Not that I have seen. He has always struck me as a most pleasant and engaging person.

On the other hand, he is no back-slapper, and I don't think he likes his own back slapped. I think his really close friends go back to his earlier years. The people who have become close to him since those early days are only his political lieutenants. He wants and needs absolute loyalty in people. He gets this from old friends and from his staff, but I can't see him letting down his hair to casual friends.

**Q What kinds of things irritate him?**  
**A** Incompetence. I have never seen him show irritation publicly. I think he blows off steam internally. For example, reporters who are late to a press conference, or television people who insist on separate interviews, or people who want to have a word with him in the midst of the terrific pressure of campaigning—he deals with all these problems with great equanimity. But he is such a restless, fast-moving person, so impatient to get on with the job, that I have never felt there was very much equanimity underneath.

**Q There have been reports that he was a "playboy." Is there anything to these reports?**

**A** Maybe he would like to be one like all the rest of us, but I don't see how a man could be a "playboy" who, for our years, has been in the thick of a political campaign, accompanied day and night by newspapermen and staff.

**Q How does he handle people who annoy him or bore him?**

**A** I think his staff knows better than to let such people take up much of his time. He would always be courteous to a visitor, but a phone will ring, or a secretary will come, or he will be called out of the office. Something will happen to cut off the "agony." His staff would see the danger signals—but I doubt that the visitor will.

You see, he is a kind and considerate person to the extent that this is possible for a big-time politician. Of course, it is true that politics don't leave much time for assuaging hurt feelings. I think, however, Senator Kennedy is very sensitive to other people's feelings, and certainly he would never hurt people deliberately.

**Q Will he go in very much for social life at the White House?**

**A** No, I don't think he will have much use for some of the more traditional and ceremonial White House activities. He is a very businesslike, no-nonsense type of person, and I don't think the Presidency is going to change him in that respect.

**Q Will intellectuals play a strong role at the White House?**

**A** In an advisory way, yes. I don't think there will be a single, cohesive "brain trust." My guess will be that he will have lots of advisers in different walks of life as he needs them, but I don't think he will formalize this very much.

**Q Are businessmen and bankers likely to find a welcome at the White House?**

**A** Very much so. I've noticed that, even when he is under

(continued on page 74)

## ... "Kennedy has a very practical grasp of the economic system"

terrific pressure, he always seems able to make himself available to all kinds of people. This is one thing he enjoys in public life—exchanging ideas with all kinds of people, perhaps having a battle of wits with them. He likes to take on people with ideas different from his own.

I do think he will be most interested in bankers and businessmen who, no matter how "conservative" they may be, are able to articulate ideas—interesting and provocative ideas. I doubt that he'll have much interest in spending much time with people who still are living back in McKinley's day, intellectually.

**Q** Would you say that he has a dislike of big business?

**A** Not that I've ever seen. He is very sophisticated about the economy generally, and does not have the old Populist trust-busting attitude. I'm sure he feels there are some problems raised by big business, but he also knows the needs and role of big business in our economy. And, certainly, considering his personal situation, he is not awed by moneyed men or resentful toward them.

**Q** Is he likely then to have an understanding of economic problems?

**A** I would say he has a very practical grasp of the actual workings of the economic system, gained through talks over the years with businessmen and labor leaders and others. And I think he has an intellectual grasp, too.

Actually, I think our Presidents in the past would have done better if they had had a better intellectual grasp of economics. For instance, if Roosevelt had understood better the economic theories of John Maynard Keynes at the time we were presented the need for applying them, he would have done better in the recession of the late 1930s.

I think President-elect Kennedy is better equipped in this respect because we as a nation have learned so much about economics since Roosevelt's time. Then, he also talks with businessmen—I was astonished at the number in western Massachusetts who have talked with him at length. And he talks with leading economists in this country.

So here is a man who, perhaps more than any President before him, has the chance to show both a practical and intellectual understanding of our economic problems.

### HOW CABINET MAY FARE—

**Q** How about the Cabinet? Will it play an important role in his thinking?

**A** I rather think that, as with most Democratic Presidents, his Cabinet will be less important than his "kitchen cabinet." Now this latter, I would say, is not likely to be a close and compact group of men. Rather, it would consist of a large number of people who have actual positions with the Administration, or who are simply called in for special meetings. In short, I think his Cabinet will be much more like Franklin D. Roosevelt's Cabinet—more a consultative agency than a decision-making agency.

**Q** How would a man like President-elect Kennedy use this "kitchen cabinet"?

**A** As Roosevelt did, I suppose—as a sounding board, a place where ideas are brought up and argued, with the President taking part in the whole deliberative process, before drawing up final policy.

Then, after hearing them out, he will turn around and make a decision. Perhaps he will make his decisions somewhat more firmly than Roosevelt did—again, because the guidelines for policy of our times will be a bit more clear-cut.

**Q** Where will his family and close friends fit into this

**A** On the first score, I should think his family will fit in pretty much as it has in the past—to help him politically, not to take positions in the policy-making group. Of course, the family has been of tremendous help throughout his career in helping him get elected, but they do not have a major influence on his views of policy. The Kennedys are a close-knit family, and undoubtedly the President will be seeing them a lot for personal relaxation, but not in the shaping of policy.

**Q** What about his friends?

**A** He does have close friends, but I don't think he is the crony sort of person. He likes to know a large number of different people, and I expect that he will depend on a great variety, just as Roosevelt did.

I don't think there will be powers behind the throne—people who can lay claim to some kind of overriding influence. It seems to me that he is going to be so much on top of his Administration, the way he was on top of his campaign, that there will be no one who is actually any kind of power behind the throne.

This man will use lots of different people, but he will not let himself be used by them. There is a hard quality of reserve and detachment, of independence. He is not the kind of man who is vulnerable in the personal sense.

**Q** Is he, then, a ruthless man?

**A** No. I've never understood why he has been accused of that. I've watched him at close hand, and I've never seen any ruthless quality about Senator Kennedy. He is practical, yes. He is realistic, hardheaded and tough-minded, but so are all successful politicians.

Actually, I don't think he needs to be ruthless. Now, Roosevelt was occasionally ruthless in his personal friendships because he ran such an experimental and sometimes disorganized Administration that there were very heated clashes in his official family. Eventually, in some cases, he had to be pretty rough in the way he resolved those problems.

But President Kennedy, I think, will run a somewhat tighter Administration. He won't allow such situations to arise, if he can help it. Hence, he simply won't have to be ruthless in the Rooseveltian sense.

**Q** Is he a good administrator? Has he ever had an executive job?

**A** No, except administering a PT boat during the war, which he did very well. But, in any case, I think—at the level of the Presidency—the main job is not management of things, it is the managing and persuading of *people*. I think that Senator Kennedy has proven pretty conclusively during the campaign that he can do this.

**Q** What happens if a quarrel does arise among his subordinates?

**A** In that case, as long as it stays inside his official family and does not threaten policy, I think he plays along with it for a while. Then, if moderating steps don't improve the situation, he intervenes—very decisively, very effectively.

**Q** Suppose a scandal arose in his Administration?

**A** Probably he would act quite swiftly if any issue arose on the fitness of a member of his Administration—not simply because of his own views on the matter, but because any kind of tolerance of unfitness has become so politically dangerous that no President can afford it.

**Q** Can subordinates differ with him on policy?

**A** There can be argument and discussion, yes—until he reaches a decision. I don't think he would tolerate for long, within his Administration, a public difference of opinion with his decision.

I am sure he believes in a "tight" ship in that sense. If he



## ... "The President-elect is a very tough-minded man"

can't persuade a subordinate to go along with his policy, then there is usually a friendly parting of the ways.

**Q** How is he as a negotiator? How will he measure up to Khrushchev?

**A** I've never had any fear on that score. The President-elect is a very tough-minded man. He can deal with Khrushchev or anyone else on a plane of complete equality.

Any foreign leader who thinks he is dealing with a boy will find, as his political opponents have, that the "boy" is way ahead of them. He is a very dangerous man to underestimate. If Khrushchev falls into that trap, he is likely to share the Republicans' experience in the first debate.

**Q** Would you expect the President-elect to make his own foreign policy?

**A** Absolutely. For one thing, he takes the constitutional view of his responsibility in that sphere. But I don't think it is his style to engage in dramatic strokes or theatrical moves. Again, he will very carefully prepare a situation, make his own views very clear, marshal support in this country and abroad, then move ahead.

Along that same line, I am positive he will emphasize the need for precise and clear understanding with people like Khrushchev. Anything like a "Camp David spirit" will come only after there is a lot of agreement on specifics.

**Q** Is that generally true of President-elect Kennedy—this insistence on details?

**A** Yes. He is a great man for specifics, and I think he will show this in both domestic and foreign policy. He is a "small print" fellow who is going to look at the small print in the other man's proposals, and will have a lot of small print of his own to get across.

**Q** Is he the kind of man who will want to carry out a great deal of personal diplomacy himself?

**A** I doubt it. The job, as he sees it, is so tremendous that he is going to rely on a great number of professional and expert diplomats in attempts to resolve problems abroad.

As I say, there will be little emphasis on big and dramatic gestures. Rather, the emphasis will be on steady and perhaps rather slow, but inexorable, progress along a long line of foreign policy.

**Q** Would you say that it is true, as some have suggested, that he has inherited from his father a sort of distrust of Europe?

**A** Well, in previous years, I think he had a great skepticism about Europe's ability to do as much for itself with American aid as it should. But it is fairly clear that Europe's economic development has removed that skepticism. Now, I would say, he wants to continue our close political relations with Europe while we concentrate on the African and Asian and Latin-American countries. I should think he will get along particularly with people like Jawaharlal Nehru of India, and, generally, I should think he will be more tolerant of neutralism than, say, John Foster Dulles was.

**Q** What is the major influence on his thinking?

**A** American political history, I would say—it is his dominant intellectual interest. I think he will be very much influenced by history as he goes into the Presidency. He knows from his reading of history that only the strong Presidents have stood in history as the great Presidents. And I think he wants to be a great President.

And, beyond this, he undoubtedly feels that the times call for that kind of man.

**Q** What kind of person will Congress find him to deal with?

**A** They are going to find him a determined and resourceful politician. I think he will be in the tradition of the able

politician-President. This man is a shrewd and discerning politician, the kind who understands fully the uses and complexities of political power. He knows from history the techniques of presidential leadership. In fact, like Franklin D. Roosevelt, I would say he is far more professional in his understanding of American politics than most of the so-called political pros. He is way ahead of them.

Thus he will use the traditional methods of presidential influence through the kind of endless and systematic activity that he demonstrated so effectively in going after the Presidency.

He will make clear his own position. He will use argument and friendly persuasion—and, incidentally, he's very good at that. He will use patronage. And I think that he will follow Roosevelt's precedent of appealing directly to the people through radio and television.

Beyond this, you can be sure that he—with Lyndon Johnson—will be keeping his fingers on all aspects of the congressional front. He will want to know what is going on in committees, conferences and backstage negotiations as they affect his program.

**Q** Would he be at all affected by the narrowness of his popular-vote margin?

**A** Oh, I think he is the kind of person who will be not at all inhibited in pushing the basic program. Of course, he is enough of a pragmatist, a realist, to set up priorities. But he would feel that, constitutionally, he was elected to govern and lead the country, whatever his majority at the polls. Also, he is the kind of person, I think, who will look on a "conservative" Congress as a challenge to his political ability, something to be analyzed and solved.

## "1,000 DAYS OF ACTION"—

**Q** Does all this, then, mean that President-elect Kennedy would embark on a "first hundred days" of action as Roosevelt did in 1933?

**A** I would go further than that, and expect that there will be—as the President-elect said during the campaign—that there will be 1,000 days of continuous action.

In his mind, what is called for in the 1960s is something different, I'm sure, from what the 1930s called for. Then, Roosevelt needed a series of spectacular and dramatic strokes to get the essential underpinnings of the New Deal established. What the 1960s call for is not so much great innovations as further development of some basic Democratic programs. And there will be need not just for legislation but for continuing financial and fiscal programs to carry us through the 1960s.

Therefore, I would expect that President-elect Kennedy sees his job as a continuous exercise of presidential power instead of the rather sporadic and staccato exercise of presidential power we saw during the New Deal.

Roosevelt was more prone to spring surprises—execute bold strokes—sometimes without a great deal of preparation in Congress. In contrast, partly because of our times and partly because of his personality, I rather think that President-elect Kennedy will engage in careful preparation and tactical planning. Also, he can now settle down and work out his program before January. Roosevelt, if you recall, was in a period of great crisis in which it was very hard to tell, from one week to the next, just what would be called for when he got into office.

**Q** Will President-elect Kennedy be willing to risk unpopularity for taking a particular action?

**A** Oh, yes, he has said that a man might have to leave

## ... Senator Kennedy "is impressed by the Wilsonian image"

office with a mob at his heels, but that the main thing is the feeling of having done a good job. He has in mind very much how his policies and actions will look in history—and, of course, from a more immediate and practical standpoint, how they will look in the next election.

**Q How would he compare in temperament and outlook with Franklin D. Roosevelt?**

**A** I don't think he is quite as supple as Roosevelt was, but he is somewhat more purposeful, somewhat more knowledgeable and analytical, somewhat clearer as to his guidelines. Again, you have to remember that Roosevelt had to experiment because we just didn't know as much about government and economics in those days.

**Q Does any particular President of the past serve as his model?**

**A** He likes certain aspects of each of several strong Presidents. If I had to name one, it might be Woodrow Wilson, especially at this point. Wilson, you see, came into power on an insecure basis in the sense that he won mainly because the Republican Party was split. So Wilson had to establish a clear image of a forthright and strong President. He had to work closely with his party leaders in Congress.

Now, Wilson grew in the Presidency. He grew in self-confidence. The President-elect has confidence, but I think he is impressed by the Wilsonian image of a man who could not only articulate policy magnificently, but could work very closely with party leaders.

**Q What qualities of President-elect Kennedy do you think may be brought out and sharpened in the White House?**

**A** Well, up until now, we have had this picture of an analytical, determined and methodical organizer, and perhaps a somewhat detached person. He has seemed in a hurry, operating pretty much from day to day and week to week, tackling a multitude of immediate problems.

In the Presidency, I think, he will have a chance to sit back and develop his long-range views, to reflect a bit more than he has until now. Also, I never had any doubt of his intellectual commitments to his beliefs, but the question was whether

he had an emotional commitment of the kind that reaches people.

The latter part of his campaign answered that question in part. He showed that he was developing an emotional as well as political tie between himself and the mass public. His work on the Democratic platform showed a political as well as intellectual commitment to certain principles, and that commitment developed in intensity as he went along.

Thus I think the quality of commitment, the quality of getting involved heart and soul behind his program, will be developed even further in him as President.

**Q What are his weaknesses that might turn up in the White House?**

**A** There is one ultimate quality of presidential leadership that perhaps no one could be expected to show until he actually entered the White House. This is the power to evoke, with both intuition and passion, the finest responses from the people—responses to ideas that lie outside his own program or party heritage. The familiar landmarks are gone, the guidelines are not very clear. I suppose this is the kind of situation that Lincoln faced with the Emancipation Proclamation, and Roosevelt faced in 1933.

The big question about President-elect Kennedy is whether he can supplement his superb intellectual and political grasp of specific problems with an instinct for the right course in history when he comes up against these unprecedented problems. He has shown tremendous political and policy commitment during the campaign—but this other quality is much less definable, much less tangible. It's the kind of thing Henry Stimson used to talk about. There are times, he said, when you simply have to bull your way through even when you don't know all the facts of the case.

During the coming year or so, President Kennedy will be broadening and extending the "liberal" and internationalist policies of the Democratic Party. But the time will come for innovations, and the great test of his Presidency will be his capacity to shift from well-trod paths to new courses through the fog.

# AS KENNEDY FORESAW THE PRESIDENCY

By Senator JOHN F. KENNEDY

*Although what follows was written in January, 1960, it represents the views of the President-elect today:*

The history of this nation—its brightest and its bleakest pages—has been written largely in terms of the different views our Presidents have had of the Presidency itself.

This history ought to tell us that the American people in 1960 have an imperative right to know what any man bidding for the Presidency thinks about the place he is bidding for—whether he is aware of and willing to use the powerful resources of that office, whether his model will be Taft or Roosevelt, Wilson or Harding.

During the past eight years, we have seen one concept of the Presidency at work. Our needs and hopes have been eloquently stated, but the initiative and follow-through have

too often been left to others. And too often his own objectives have been lost by the President's failure to override objections from within his own party, in Congress or even in his Cabinet.

The American people in 1952 and 1956 may well have preferred this detached, limited concept of the Presidency after 20 years of fast-moving, creative presidential rule. Perhaps historians will regard this as necessarily one of those frequent periods of consolidation, a time to draw breath, to recoup our national energy.

To quote the state-of-the-union message:

"No Congress . . ., on surveying the state of the nation, has met with a more pleasing prospect than that which appears at the present time."

Unfortunately, this is not Mr. Eisenhower's last message to

## In Support of the Proposals.

It is clear that the President was wholly right in anticipating that the United States would need vigorous presidential leadership and steady congressional support all through his first term. Much of the Administration program demands not merely "100 days" of support--it demands, especially in its fiscal proposals, broad Congressional action annually over a long period.

In short, there will be an Administration program to get through in 1963 and 1964 as well as this year and next. Neither the Administration nor the nation can afford to falter at any point.

The problem is this: almost always a President loses strength in Congress in the midterm Senate and House elections. This has happened in every off-year election since 1900, except for the special case of 1934. It will probably happen in 1962 (unless vigorous steps are taken to prevent it) no matter how popular the Kennedy program is among the voters generally.

A drop in Democratic strength in Congress in the 1962 elections will be interpreted--quite unfairly, of course--as popular dissatisfaction with the Administration's program. By the same token, an increase in Democratic strength will be received as an almost unprecedented vote of confidence in an administration at midterm. In short, not only does the President need more votes in Congress for his program in 1963 and 1964. He also needs psychological momentum to carry the Administration through to the fall of 1964.

What to do? We must plan now to hold the fifty most marginal seats now held by Democrats. We must seek to gain another fifty marginal seats presently held by Republicans.

How can we do this? I propose the following:

1. That the regular party organizations, the Kennedy volunteer groups, and the other pro-Administration groups be consolidated behind the Kennedy program. Today many of the Kennedy volunteer groups are withering away; the regular organizations are turning to state and local matters; independents have no organization to work through; many labor groups are carrying their part of the political burden. These and other forces must be pulled together behind the national program. We need the support and special qualities of all groups: the experience, loyalty, and stick-to-it-ness of the regulars, the vitality and talent of the volunteers; the votes of independents and pro-Kennedy Republicans.

2. Money talks. Congressional candidates need far more support from the national level than they usually receive. (As a typical example, I received about \$2000 from Washington in 1958 and had to raise about \$28,000 on my own). If we want congressional candidates to go down the line for the

Kennedy program, the Administration will have to go down the line for the candidates. Each of these candidates, together with their campaign committees and organizations, should receive, on the average, at least \$20,000 of outside help.

3. Federal patronage can be used to bring local party organizations into line behind the Kennedy program, to sidetrack possible Democratic contestants who are not strong enough to win or who are not firmly enough for the Kennedy program, to give the best candidate publicity and a position of strength from which to launch his campaign. Patronage should not be allowed to fall into the hands of local committees who will exploit it for local and narrow and even anti-Administration purposes.

4. The national Administration must not intervene directly in state and district politics. Let us not forget 1938! It must intervene indirectly--and wholeheartedly--through a locally organized and led but nationally oriented Democratic organization eager to help put across the Kennedy program. The Administration, however, must take the lead in stimulating such a group and making clear that the local organization has full backing from Washington. The organization in the pivotal states and districts would:

A. Recruit talent both for nomination to Congress and for local organization leadership. The local group should hunt for possible candidates outside the organization, if necessary. It should move quickly to back up the best man before second-raters pre-empt the field.

B. Make a systematic study of the nature of the district and the political resources in labor organizations, business, farm, civic, professional, ethnic, and other organizations. The key questions would be: Where are the Kennedy supporters at the grass roots? What can they do for the Kennedy program in 1962?

C. Serve as the local organization through which the Administration backs up pro-Kennedy candidates. The Administration cannot be in the position of trying to interfere in "local politics" from the outside. It must have protection in case efforts fail in any one area. The local organization must make the effort with full outside backing.

D. Register voters. In 25 years of practical politics I have never seen a registration or canvassing program that even approached the British parties in efficiency and results. With expert advice, leadership, and money the local organizations could do this by starting in at least a year ahead of time.

E. The local organizations should unite behind the best man and support him for the Democratic nomination as well as in the final election campaign. It is absurd that party leaders and organizations should stand by helplessly neutral in the most crucial decision a party can make--its choosing of its standard bearer. The nomination decision is the crucial decision--it must not go by default.

F. President Kennedy's leadership is round-the-clock, round-the-year leadership. He must have the same kind of followership. The Kennedy program needs continuous support today. So will the Kennedy programs of the future--and the programs of all the Democratic Administrations to come. Today Democratic party power is falling back into the hands of local candidates, courthouse rings, and local and state organizations. The people who were aroused in 1960 behind an inspired candidate and a great program are inert and disorganized, responding favorably to a Kennedy appearance on television but doing nothing about the job of supporting him--and knowing not what to do. But the people are there, waiting to be organized. This is the ultimate and never-ending job of an effective Kennedy-Democratic group in each state and district.

5. The great Presidents--the effective Presidents--have been party Presidents. But no President since Thomas Jefferson has realized the full potential of party leadership and national party organization. Both the successes and failures of former Presidents point to the great possibilities of today. None of the above proposals can be carried out without strong, constant, and imaginative leadership from the White House. Only because our President today possesses those qualities can we look forward to these political tasks with confidence.

James M. Burns  
Williams College  
Williamstown, Mass.

CONFIDENTIAL - NOT FOR CIRCULATION

March 4, 1961

To: the President

From: James M. Burns

Subject: Enacting the Kennedy Program

This is a follow-up to our discussions of last April and December. As agreed, I will send copies to a small number of your advisers, making clear that these are my views and not necessarily those of the Administration.

In the attached paper I contend that:

1. Events are already vindicating your view that the nation needs a "thousand days" of leadership and action.
2. Such leadership will be in danger unless more Kennedy Democrats can be elected to Congress in 1962.
3. Vigorous steps must be taken now to prevent the normal midterm erosion and to try to elect at least fifty more Democrats to the House and Senate.

I propose that:

1. The regular Democratic organizations, the Kennedy groups, and other favorable elements be consolidated now behind the Administration's national program, before the campaign momentum is lost.
2. That planning start now to raise a substantial sum of money--at least two million dollars--to help the 1962 campaign of Kennedy Democrats.
3. That patronage be used now to clear the way for the nomination of pro-Administration Democrats in 1962 primaries and conventions.
4. That local leadership be developed now in states and congressional districts to:
  - A. Recruit the finest talent for nomination in 1962.
  - B. Make a study of the electoral possibilities of their area, through polls and other methods.

The President

- C. Serve as a local organization through which Administration financial and other help could be channeled to the candidate.
  - D. Plan effective registration and canvassing programs.
  - E. Powerfully back up the candidate locally in his nomination and election campaigns.
  - F. Serve as a continuing source of vigorous local and state support for Presidential programs and objectives.
5. That you give all these efforts your personal--though sometimes indirect--backing. I repeat what I said to you last December: you must be the Jefferson of the 20th Century!

James M. Burns  
Williams College  
Williamstown, Mass.

In Support of the Proposals.

It is clear that the President was wholly right in anticipating that the United States would need vigorous presidential leadership and steady congressional support all through his first term. Much of the Administration program demands not merely "100 days" of support--it demands, especially in its fiscal proposals, broad Congressional action annually over a long period.

In short, there will be an Administration program to get through in 1963 and 1964 as well as this year and next. Neither the Administration nor the nation can afford to falter at any point.

The problem is this: almost always a President loses strength in Congress in the midterm Senate and House elections. This has happened in every off-year election since 1900, except for the special case of 1934. It will probably happen in 1962 (unless vigorous steps are taken to prevent it) no matter how popular the Kennedy program is among the voters generally.

A drop in Democratic strength in Congress in the 1962 elections will be interpreted--quite unfairly, of course--as popular dissatisfaction with the Administration's program. By the same token, an increase in Democratic strength will be received as an almost unprecedented vote of confidence in an administration at midterm. In short, not only does the President need more votes in Congress for his program in 1963 and 1964. He also needs psychological momentum to carry the Administration through to the fall of 1964.

What to do? We must plan now to hold the fifty most marginal seats now held by Democrats. We must seek to gain another fifty marginal seats presently held by Republicans.

How can we do this? I propose the following:

1. That the regular party organizations, the Kennedy volunteer groups, and the other pro-Administration groups be consolidated behind the Kennedy program. Today many of the Kennedy volunteer groups are withering away; the regular organizations are turning to state and local matters; independents have no organization to work through; many labor groups are carrying their part of the political burden. These and other forces must be pulled together behind the national program. We need the support and special qualities of all groups: the experience, loyalty, and stick-to-it-ness of the regulars, the vitality and talent of the volunteers; the votes of independents and pro-Kennedy Republicans.

2. Money talks. Congressional candidates need far more support from the national level than they usually receive. (As a typical example, I received about \$2000 from Washington in 1958 and had to raise about \$28,000 on my own). If we want congressional candidates to go down the line for the



Kennedy program, the Administration will have to go down the line for the candidates. Each of these candidates, together with their campaign committees and organizations, should receive, on the average, at least \$20,000 of outside help.

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