

Charles Roberts Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 04/11/1966
Administrative Information

Creator: Charles Roberts
Interviewer: Charles Morrissey
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Biographical Note

Charles Roberts (1916-1992) was a White House correspondent from 1954 to 1969 and the assistant chief of the Washington bureau of *Newsweek* from 1962 to 1969. This interview focuses on John F. Kennedy's assassination and its aftermath and the Kennedy administration's relationship with the press, among other topics.

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By Charles W. Roberts

to the

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Gift of Personal Statement
Appendix A

By Charles W. Roberts

to the

JOHN F. KENNEDY LIBRARY

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Charles W. Roberts

Charles W. Roberts

Aug. 30, 1971

Month, Day, Year

Janet B. Rhoads

Archivist of the United States

10 7 71

Month, Day, Year

Charles Roberts– JFK #1
Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	John F. Kennedy’s [JFK] and Jacqueline Kennedy’s [JBK] trip to Dallas
2	JFK’s speech at the Texan Hotel
3	Size of crowd greeting JFK and JBK
4	Hearing gunfire
5	Chaos on the press bus
6	Going to the Dallas Trade Mart
7	Learning JFK had been shot
8	Going to Parkland Hospital
9	Learning that JFK probably would not survive
11	Mac Kilduff’s statement to the press
12	Transportation of JFK’s body
13	Observing JBK with the casket
14	Organizing the press
16	Trip on Air Force One back to Washington D.C.
17	Lyndon B. Johnson’s [LBJ] swearing in
18	Reactions of the White House staff
19	Arrival in Washington D.C.
20	Urgency of reporting on the assassination
24	Conflicting eyewitness testimonies
26	Apprehension before JFK’s visit to Dallas
27	Relationship between JFK and LBJ
28	Conflicts between the White House staff
29	Trips with JFK
30	Security on trips
31	Plot to kill JFK in Palm Beach
32	JFK’s comments on Roberts’ news stories
34	JFK’s comfort with the press
35	White House staff’s accessibility by the press
36	Contrast between the Kennedy and Eisenhower administrations
37	Allegations of managing news
38	Dwight Eisenhower’s role in the 1960 campaign
Addendum	Roberts’ story on JFK’s assassination
Addendum	Report on LBJ’s swearing in
Addendum	“Memo to Ken Crawford Re: Kennedy”

Oral History Interview

with

CHARLES ROBERTS

Bethesda, Maryland

April 11, 1966

By Charles Morrissey

For the John F. Kennedy Library

MORRISSEY: Let's start with the Dallas trip.

ROBERTS: These are a couple of things I remember about the trip that stick out in my memory-- that would have even if it hadn't come to the end it did: one was the fact that this was the first political trip Jackie [Jacqueline B. Kennedy] had made with him since, well, the primaries of '60; and the fact that she was getting such an acclaim everywhere. People were asking, "Where's Jackie?" and there were as many yells for Jackie as there were for Jack. And, second, it was a political fence-mending trip where [John F.] Kennedy had brought the then Vice President [Lyndon B.] Johnson along to try to get the two factions of the Texas Democratic party together, and he seemed to be succeeding at that, too.

So the whole thing was on a tremendously high note the morning that we started out in Fort Worth at the Texan Hotel, having spent the night there. The President got up very early and went down to a Democratic rally. I remember I had a room over this parking lot where they had organized this party rally, and I started hearing the crowd on the street down there before I even got up. I think I got down to the parking lot at something like 7:45. The President spoke at about that time. He came down with Lyndon Johnson and he had on the platform with him both [Ralph W.] Yarborough and [John] Connally, who, in a way, were sort of what--at least part of what--this trip was all about, getting them together, and they had succeeded in doing that. He made--for that early in the morning--a very funny speech, a clever speech, about Texas and the Democratic party and so on. There was a light rain, but this crowd was tremendously enthusiastic. Then he went back in to the hotel to this breakfast, arranged by something like the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce. It was pretty much a businessman audience. And Mrs. Kennedy hadn't gotten up as early as he did, so he went on without her. Not long before he spoke, she came down. Then in his speech he used the same gag that had gotten such a laugh in Paris, identifying himself as the man who came to Texas with Jackie Kennedy.

Well, she was very much, from the standpoint of spectators anyway, almost the focus of that trip and was when we got over to Dallas, after those two quick speeches at Fort Worth.

For some reason we flew over to Dallas instead of motorcading there. And I remember the President going the whole length of a chain-link fence over at the airport with Jackie at his side. We had seen him do this many times before, but that morning I was particularly eager and walked most of the distance right behind him. Then when they got to the end of that fence, when they had literally run out of spectators, people to shake hands with, and were turning to go back to get in the limousine, I asked Jackie how she liked campaigning. And she said, "It's wonderful, it's wonderful." This, I would judge,

would be about quarter of twelve, or in that area--just about forty-five minutes before the underpass.

We then, in my case, ran toward the press buses, and the President got in his open car. As you know, he had inquired about the weather that morning and decided that they would not have the top on it. They had a choice of three tops: a fabric top--a fabric top, of course, would have obscured him from the public; and the plastic top, which the Secret Service had told me would deflect a bullet but would not stop it; and then a metal top. But he didn't want any of those that morning, and so we started into downtown Dallas with him in an open car. There were, I think, twelve cars in that motorcade. And I was in the first press bus. There has been some discussion about which was the first and which was the second press bus because the truth is at times they leap-frogged one another. But I am quite sure that I was in the first press bus as we went down Main Street in Dallas.

Here again, it was a big story. Dallas, which had been a stronghold of not just conservatives, but reactionaries, had voted against Kennedy and Johnson quite overwhelmingly in 1960, but had turned out big this day, and the motorcade just had to inch its way through the crowd. They had a fairly heavy escort of police motorcycles, but the crowd would surge in behind the motorcycles and bring the car to a stop and shake his hands. I remember on our press bus there was a Dallas reporter. And the question of security came up as we went down Main Street, before we turned left to go a little out from the downtown area to that underpass.

MORRISSEY: It came up casually?

ROBERTS: I just can't remember what triggered it, but I was sitting in the right-hand front seat of the bus with Bob [Robert] Pierpoint of CBS, and this man, I think he was from the Times-Herald, was in the left-hand front seat, right behind the bus driver. Of course, there were a lot of observations exchanged back and forth on the bus about the size of the crowd, how it compared with some other cities and so on. And for some reason, he said there wouldn't be any security problem because of what had happened to Adlai Stevenson there just about two weeks before, I believe, when he got spat on and hit over the head with a placard. He said, "The cops won't let them get near him today because of the Stevenson incident." Well, there, right in front of our eyes, they were getting up to the car. But it was a friendly crowd, and I didn't think of that until later.

We turned left off of Main Street and got over to Elm Street, and the last thing I remember, besides small talk, before the incident was looking up at the sign on this building as we came to a park and sort of turned to the right to go down this incline under the triple underpass. I saw the words "Texas Schoolbook Depository" and thought it was a weird name for a building and wondered what it was although it was a fairly self-explanatory name. And it was, of course, obviously, just seconds after that that I heard what I thought was a backfire. In, let's see, nine years of covering the White House, I had covered an awful lot of presidential motorcades, and I'd heard a lot of police motorcycles backfire--I'd seen them heat up so that they caught fire even--and I had dismissed it in my mind as a backfire.

Bob Pierpoint, who was sitting next to me, said, "That sounded like gunfire." And as he said it, I looked off to my left and saw a man sprawl over what I think was his daughter. I've never sorted out which of the many such incidents this was in the later histories of the thing, but a man simply threw himself over his daughter, and knocked her to the sidewalk in the process. And I snapped back and said, "My God, it was gunfire!" because I realized that no parent would do this unless something terrible had happened. At the same second I saw a policeman running across the park to our left pulling his pistol out of a holster, reaching back to his hip and pulling it out. And of course I realized--this confirmed--that something terrible had happened.

I heard a second shot, or what I now know to be a shot, a split second before--or after--seeing that policeman run across the park. You never bare a weapon in front of the President unless there's an emergency, so I knew there was an emergency. I then looked off to the right and saw a policeman drive a three-wheel motorcycle over the curb to the road off to the right of the President's car, pulling his pistol from his pocket and starting up an embankment there. I believe that's the embankment that leads up to the railroad tracks under which the motorcade was about to move.

Well, then our bus came to a halt, and by this time everybody in the bus, back as well as the front, realized that something had happened. And everybody started screaming different advice to the bus driver: "Open the door." "No, close the door." "Let's go." "Let's go, damn it." "Something's happened." "Stop the bus, let us out." What he did was to keep the door open for a few minutes. A few of us jumped out onto the pavement but didn't get far from the bus because from long experience with motorcades you know that they start up suddenly, and if sixty people get out of a bus and the motorcade starts up, they simply can't get back in.

What I saw up ahead will, frankly, always be a kind of oblong blur to me. I think that I saw the back of the Queen Mary, the big security car that was immediately behind the President. And I think I saw a man standing in the back of that car with an automatic rifle or a sub-machine gun--they carry an automatic rifle now. This was in a flash. But this thing was like the explosion in a shingle factory; it happened so fast that you didn't know where to look. And it seems to me, in recollection, that I didn't look at the President's car. It must have been just ahead of the Queen Mary. At any rate, I don't profess to have seen the car the President was in at that minute. They were down this incline and a little to the left of us. They were farther into the underpass. I think that our first press bus must have been six to eight car lengths behind the President's but stretched out a little because we were moving along at twenty miles an hour or so then. And I place it almost under the windows of the Schoolbook Depository. That is where we came to a halt.

At any rate, I jumped back aboard the bus and we were held up then by the police. I believe one of the police motorcycles simply pulled in front of our bus. And looking out the front window of the bus, I saw the President's car and the Queen Mary, this big armoured Cadillac, streaking along the thruway, having gone through the underpass and out on the other side, turned right and going off to the right, along the thruway that went down to Parkland Hospital. We were held up there probably, oh, I guess five minutes.

There's no precedent. When somebody shoots at the President, we realized it as the day went on, there is simply no precedent for what you do with the press--who goes where. So, within a few minutes they released the press bus and we went on to the hall where the President was to speak--the Dallas Trade Mart.

And by this time, all of us were convinced the President had been shot at, but we had no earthly way of knowing, aboard that press bus, that he'd been hit. My thought wasthey had followed doctrine, and at the sound of gunfire had simply gotten the hell out of there. It seemed like the bus was going about five miles an hour, when we wanted to go ninety. We lumbered up to the back of the Trade Mart, burst into this hall, literally pushed these double doors open and swarmed into the place.

And this was kind of an otherworldly scene. They were sitting there with no knowledge of what had happened, and the water fountains playing softly. I think there was music piped into the place. And here were perhaps a thousand lunch guests sitting there waiting for the President, and they looked up at us like we were men from Mars or nuts of some kind. And we couldn't get out of them what had happened, of course, because they knew even less than we did. Most of the reporters off of that bus, by instinct, said, "Well, where's the press room?" They knew at least there would be a telephone there. And so they went up two or three stories. There was an escalator going up, I remember, and they jammed aboard the thing.

I decided that the President wasn't going to be there, and I suspected nobody was going to be there who knew any more than we did. I ran out into the parking lot and ran into another policeman with a three-wheel motorcycle in the parking lot of the Trade Mart. He was listening to this tremendous radio traffic that had been touched off by the assassination. I asked him where had the President gone. I didn't know that he had gone to the hospital. And he said, "The President has been shot. They're taking him to Parkland Hospital."

This was my first realization that he had been not only shot at but hit. From there I ran up to the front of the building and, I remember this distinctly: As I was running I heard the police dispatcher say, "There is no description of the gunman," or words to that effect. This would have been just minutes after the shots. Of course, they had a description later.

There in the front of the building, the first person I ran into--and I ran into him physically, bumped into him--was George Burkley, Admiral Burkley, the President's personal physician. He had been back in the motorcade, probably just a car or two ahead of the press bus, somewhere after the security car and the Vice President's car. They have since moved him up, by the way, in all the presidential motorcades, to where he rides right behind the President now. But he had been cut off, and he had gone to the Trade Mart--not knowing. His car had been stopped, too. But he had gotten the word somehow, perhaps from the policeman there, over his police radio.

He had a physical therapist with him, the man that used to give, I guess, massage or back rubs to President Kennedy and accompanied him on all trips. They were piling into this car, or started to right after I ran into Admiral Burkley. And I asked him to give me a ride, and he wouldn't do it, for which I've since forgiven him.

I ran to a police sergeant a few feet away and said, "I've got to get to Parkland Hospital, fast." And he knew, apparently, why, or knew I was a newspaperman, walked out into that freeway, flagged down the first car that came along, and it was a car driven by a Mexican woman or a Mexican-American woman. She had a teen-age daughter with her. And this sergeant said, "You take this man to Parkland Hospital. And take him there fast." And she did.

She had her automobile radio on and by now was tuned in on what was happening. So she drove me to Parkland and right through the first gate. I think by then they had about one cop at the main gate of the place, but he didn't challenge us for some reason. She drove me right up to the emergency entrance of the hospital, to within a few feet of the emergency platform where there was a sign, I remember. It was a neon sign and it said, "Ambulances Only."

The President's car was there, still at the point where it had pulled up and they had taken the President out into that emergency entrance. The people in perhaps one or two cars behind the security car, certainly the people who were in the Vice President's car, or some of the people who were in the Vice President's car were there, Senator Yarborough was there. I started to walk into the emergency entrance and was turned back, then stood in the driveway and talked to Senator Yarborough for a minute.

I remember that the Secret Service men were then starting to mop up the back seat of the big Lincoln the President was in, and a few minutes later they started putting the fabric top on it. And when I went over to look at it a little closer, one of the agents waved me aside and said, "You can't look." Later, of course, this seemed to me ironic that this wall of protection went up when it, of course, could do no good.

Senator Yarborough, having been in the Vice President's car, very close behind, knew better than any of us did--in that driveway, at that moment--that the President couldn't possibly survive. He kept saying, "This is a most"--I believe he used the word "heinous"--"a most heinous deed." He was talking in an old Southern style. And I asked him, "Where was the President hit?" And he said, "I can't tell you. I can't tell you that." And at the same time he put his hand up to the right rear corner of his head, which is exactly, of course, where the President had been hit.

Well, we soon learned the wire service car had not been delayed, or only for a minute or two. So they had followed him very closely, and had seen the President removed from the car and realized that it would probably be a miracle if he survived. So we soon became aware that the President had not only he been hit, but that he might not survive.

There was much interviewing of people, some of whom knew less than we did, actually, but you felt you had to do something. This was such an event that you couldn't just stand there, so we kept grabbing people who had seen the ambulance pull up to the hospital. One teen-age boy showed up who, with a Brownie camera, had taken a picture of the President's car as it sped by on the thruway. And incidentally that picture was later printed. He sold it, I think, to the AP [Associated Press]. Anybody who had seen the car or professed to know anything about it we were interviewing, as well as Yarborough and others who were in the motorcade.

Let's see, the shots were at 12:30. I think it was at 12:57 that we saw the priest arrive, the priest who turned out to be Father [Oscar L.] Huber in whose parish this Parkland Hospital was. A cop there observed that "it must be the last rites." And, of course, he was right.

All eyes were on that emergency door, but there was no traffic in and out of it. White House press people, [Malcolm] Mac Kilduff, who was the Acting Press Secretary, Wayne Hawks, who is the White House Chief of Records, but was assisting Kilduff on the trip, had gone around to the front of the hospital, and established a press room in a nurses' classroom on the ground floor.

After the priest went in, which, according to the chronology, would have been just minutes before the President died, or was officially recorded as dead--a few minutes after that--most of us moved around through another entrance of the hospital and into this press room which was a nurses' classroom. There were still things on the blackboard from their last class in chemistry or whatever. Some of us reconnoitered the hospital, and the word was seeping out that the President was dead.

I went to the office of the Superintendent of Nurses, and there was a nurse there who said she had talked to a nurse who had been in the emergency room. We were getting these second hand reports, but they were too . . . We knew that nobody would invent anything like that. Still the magnitude of it hadn't penetrated. I know, because I was thinking of where am I going to get a telephone and things of that sort . . .

The switchboard was absolutely tied in knots, but some of us were lucky enough to get a phone that had an "out" bottom that you could press and go directly outside. I got off two calls to Newsweek in New York, and on the second one I told them that I thought the President was dead, that the evidence was getting overwhelming.

Then the word came down the corridor outside that office that Kilduff was coming to the press room, and so we all dropped our phones. I remember closing the door of the office that my phone was in hoping I'd be able to get it again if I had to. I went to this nurses' classroom.

Mac Kilduff came in at 1:33, if I remember, a little more than half an hour after the time at which they fixed the President's death. He had a cigarette in one hand and a very short piece of paper in the other with a simple, perhaps thirty word statement. He read it with his hands trembling. I can't quote it now, but it was to the effect that the President of the United States died today of a gunshot wound and just one or two other sentences--and that's all we had.

Mac later brought one of Governor Connally's aides there to describe Connally's wound. And that was the first word we had, I'm quite sure, that Connally was not critically wounded also. Oh, there had been that report that the Vice President went into the hospital either clutching his heart or his arm. Some people thought his arm might be broken; some people thought he'd had another heart attack. But that story had been laid to rest.

We later found out that he (Mr. Johnson) sat in a little room off of the emergency room. I think it was one of these little examining rooms. He sat on the examining table and his wife on a wooden stool next to him, with just a Secret Service agent at the door. That's where he was while he became President.

I left the press room--being a weekly, I didn't have deadlines every minute to meet--and went upstairs through the lobby of the hospital and got in an elevator in the wing that contained the emergency ward--an elevator going downstairs--and came out very close to the emergency room. I wanted then to get back to the rear of the hospital to see what was going to happen. I had to go outside and climb in the window of a room that actually faced on to the emergency admitting door. It was there again I ran into Bob Pierpoint of CBS. He had a phone in there. As you know, each of the wire services and networks by this time had staked out a phone somewhere near the emergency room.

At the door was a hearse from this O Neal undertaking parlor, funeral home. I remember two of us, Hugh Sidey of Time and I, talked to O Neal, and I guess he was the first one from whom we learned that they were planning to fly the President's body back to Washington. This later became a little story, but it just seemed incongruous at the time. O Neal was sitting in the front seat of this hearse, and he said, "They expect me to take this body out to the airport and put it aboard a plane, and I can't take the body out to the airport because I don't have a certificate or a permit." Apparently he was quite convinced he had to follow the letter of the law.

It was after talking to him that I climbed in the window of this room that had a door facing onto the rear door and a door opening onto the corridor that led to the operating room, the emergency operating room to which they had taken the President. I stepped into that corridor just minutes before they brought the President's body out in the bronze casket that O Neal had brought in that hearse.

The casket was on one of these little rubber-tired dollies and Mrs. Kennedy was walking on the right side of it, as I recall, because she was on my side. A policeman pinned me up against the wall as they passed by. She was walking with her left hand on the casket and a completely glazed look on her face, obviously in shock. It was deathly still in that corridor as this casket was wheeled out. I had a feeling that if somebody had literally fired a pistol in front of her face that she would just have blinked. It seemed that she was absolutely out of this world.

MORRISSEY: Who else was walking with her?

ROBERTS: I know I saw [P. Kenneth] Kenny O'Donnell on the platform--there was sort of a dock there-- a minute later. I saw the priest on the loading platform. In fact, Mrs. Kennedy stopped and talked to him for what seemed to me like minutes. I just couldn't imagine what they were talking about, more than to say good-bye, but I remember seeing her in conversation with Father Huber. But having seen her go by and followed her . . . Outside of Kenny, I don't remember who else was on that loading platform. They put the bronze casket in the back door of the hearse. The curtains of it were drawn, and Mrs. Kennedy insisted on riding in the back of the hearse rather than in the front seat.

Now Dr. Burkley was there, and he tried to talk her into getting into the front seat, riding, I guess it would have been, with him and the driver, but she wouldn't. She insisted on getting in the back.

There were not many of us back there then. I think that most of the reporters with deadlines that night or with papers and wire services running wide open were still back in the press room. I don't think there were more than four or five of us back there. The hearse left with not more than two, three, or four cars at the most, and started for the airport.

It was there at the back door, the emergency door of the hospital, that the White House started trying to organize a pool of reporters. There were fifty-six of us on the trip. The custom is that on each leg of a presidential trip the two wire service reporters go because they each represent hundreds of papers, and then two specials will go--for a total of four reporters. This was to be a trip, at that time, as far as we knew, the four or five of us who were gathered around there, simply to accompany President Kennedy's body back to Washington.

I was to have been the pool reporter on the next leg of the President's trip that day, ~~which~~ was to Austin. Wayne Hawks had found Merriman Smith of the UP [United Press], one of the wire service reporters; he had not been able to find Jack Bell of the AP [Associated Press], who was probably in a phone booth somewhere. He had found one network man, Sid Davis of Westinghouse. He needed a writing reporter, not a wire service or a network man. He had grabbed Bob Roth of The Philadelphia Bulletin, I remember, and, oh, partly out of hunch, instinct, I don't know what, I decided that I ought to make that trip to the airport.

We were to follow that little motorcade out as fast as we could get organized. So I said, "Wait a minute. I was to have been the pooler on the next leg, and wherever the President goes, although he's not going to Austin, I'm going to go."

So three of us jumped into an unmarked police car--driven by a uniformed policeman, but an unmarked car, no siren. And we were starting, perhaps as much as six, ~~eight~~ or ten minutes after they had removed President Kennedy's body. And so we had to go like hell to get there. For all we knew they were going to put that casket aboard a plane and fly out immediately. So we went out there through mid-afternoon traffic at about. . . . Sometimes I think we got up to eighty miles an hour without a siren. We went through red lights and crossed median strips, and the driver kept telling us that they couldn't use sirens.

He wasn't even using his horn much. The idea was they were not to attract attention to the airport. They didn't want a stream of cars converging on the airport with horns and sirens blowing. So we got out there and were passed through a couple of security rings and deposited on the apron just outside of Air Force One.

All the curtains were drawn. They had gotten the President's casket aboard by removing some seats from the back of the airplane. And we didn't know until we got there--we weren't sure anyway--that President Johnson was also aboard the plane. Actually all they were waiting for was the press--the President, I learned later, had insisted on some press witnesses to his swearing-in--and for Judge Sarah Hughes, the woman judge who administered the oath. She came aboard as we were standing there. She arrived and was taken aboard and then Kilduff gave us the signal to come aboard.

The three of us went aboard, Merriman Smith, Sid Davis, and myself. When we got aboard Kilduff told us that three could witness the swearing-in, but only two would be able to return to Washington. There was a good reason for this, namely that all of the reporters from Washington had to have an eyewitness fill-in on the swearing-in. So Davis elected, or was elected, to get off there, and Smith and I stayed aboard for both the swearing in and the flight back.

I can remember Smitty as we crowded aboard the plane. We went up the forward ramp and were pushing back toward the midsection of the plane, the sort of office compartment in which the President was sworn in, and Smitty looked down at his right hand and said, "My God, I've lost my typewriter." I remember, as a reflex, I looked at my right hand to see if I had my typewriter, and I did. But if anybody had asked me then, "Do you have your typewriter?" without looking I wouldn't have known. It was such a traumatic thing up to then.

The three of us squeezed in there and then some more Secret Service agents, witnesses, friends of President Johnson that he had gathered along the way--people like Jack Valenti, who was in the motorcade, Bill Moyers, who had heard of the assassination while in Austin, advancing Kennedy's speech that night, making advance arrangements, had flown up. So there were a lot of people who were attached to the Vice President, plus all of Kennedy's staff and Mrs. Kennedy's staff, and a good many Secret Service agents.

I don't think anybody knows to this day how many people were aboard that plane as we flew back, but we do know that there were twenty-seven people in that mid-section compartment where the President took the oath. After we got into that compartment, I know I was standing right behind Evelyn Lincoln who was standing immediately behind the President. You can see in that picture: she's right over his right shoulder and I'm right behind her. Smitty is back in the far corner there. And then you have several congressmen from Texas who would not normally have been aboard the plane. Jack Valenti is there and Chief Currey, the Dallas Chief of Police.

The picture was made by Cecil Stoghton, the Army Signal Corps photographer, who squeezed in and sort of wedged himself up against a bulkhead with his feet on a transom and, fortunately, had a wide-angle lens because he was shooting to get as many people as were there in the picture. He was shooting at very close range.

We stood there, and they had not been running the air conditioning on the plane apparently. It was just sweltering. And at least one, perhaps two, of the engines were idling because I remember this steady whine in the background of the jet engines--not the roar you get on takeoff but a sort of whine. And nobody could think of anything to say.

We were waiting then with the judge aboard. Larry O'Brien had found a Bible in the after-compartment, in the President's sleeping compartment, and brought it up. Jack Valenti had phoned [Nicholas deB.] Nick Katzenbach, the Assistant Attorney General. Of course, they had talked to Bobby Kennedy by then, but I can remember Valenti telling me it was his job to call Katzenbach-- to call him back.

They had had the oath read over the phone from Washington on a secretary-to-secretary basis. And then it occurred to someone--how do we know that this is the presidential oath? They might have administered the oath for a senator or something. So Valenti's job was to call back. He got the Assistant Attorney General Katzenbach and made sure that this was word for word the oath. And it was typed out on a little Air Force One memo pad, about three by five memo. The judge had that and the Bible.

Mac Kilduff found a Dictaphone machine, not a tape recorder but a dictaphone, and set that up. In some of the pictures of the swearing-in you can see his hand reaching out holding the microphone up in the direction of the President.

We waited quite a while for Mrs. Kennedy. The President had decided he wanted her there for the swearing in. And eventually she came forward from that after-compartment where they had placed the casket. Again, she was in what appeared to me to be almost total shock--that strawberry wool suit, the skirt of it spattered with blood and her hose almost saturated with blood--and she took a position to the left of the President. Lady Bird stood on his right, and they faced the judge as she administered the oath. The President added the words, "so help me God" as he finished the oath.

There was a minute or so of awkward silence, and the President turned and kissed Lady Bird. He embraced Jackie, holding her by the elbows, as I remember, just sort of an embrace. And he turned and kissed Evelyn Lincoln who was right next to me.

The first words I remember immediately after the oath were Chief Currey of the Dallas Police saying to Mrs. Kennedy, "You'd better go and lie down now, honey" or "little lady," or some diminutive affectionate like that, "You've had a real bad day." Whether Mrs. Kennedy heard him, I don't know. She didn't leave right away.

There was handshaking all around, but a very solemn sort of handshaking, of course. Certainly no congratulations or anything of that sort. And then Mrs. Kennedy did go aft, and then the President turned and said, "Now let's get airborne." That was, if I remember, eight minutes after he took the oath.

The Air Force by this time was a little concerned about the number of people on the plane, and they did force quite a few people off and escort off people like Sid Davis, who was there for the swearing-in but was not going to make the trip back. Then they buttoned up the hatch and we were gone within minutes of the President's taking the oath--with the casket in the rear section and the new President in the midsection of the plane, pretty much surrounded by his aides.

Mrs. Kennedy was with Kenny O'Donnell, Larry O'Brien, people like that, who were on President Kennedy's staff. Johnson was with his new staff which was then just coming into being, people like Bill Moyers, Valenti, in the midsection. And then in the forward section, were second echelon people of Kennedy's staff--secretaries; Evelyn Lincoln, his personal secretary; and Pam Turnure, Mrs. Kennedy's press secretary. Some of them were weeping uncontrollably and there were quite a few Secret Servicemen--some of them crying, by the way--strong men crying. And Smitty and myself.

I remember when the President came to that forward compartment right after we were airborne, I guess sort of seeing who was aboard. I remember what my first words to him were. I'm not a very religious guy, but I can remember saying, "God be with you, Mr. President." This was the tone, I think, of almost everything that was said aboard the plane during almost the whole two hours back.

Of course, having left the hospital when we did, we were really at the nerve center of the world in a way, but we didn't know that they had caught a suspect by then, and we didn't know that he was a loner. For all we knew, it was a world-wide conspiracy. We knew that about half the cabinet was on its way to Tokyo. What had happened to them we didn't know either. The uncertainty, the questions that arose--Will the Russians do anything while we're in the air, during this two-hour flight--I'll never forget.

During the flight President Johnson came and read to us the statement that he was going to make on arrival at Andrews [Air Force Base] his first statement after becoming President. Then he saw that we got mimeographed copies of it, or rather a carbon copy.

We landed at Andrews at about 6, and the whole top layer of government that was not on that plane on the way to Tokyo was there, of course. We stood by while the President's casket was removed by that lift truck. I believe it was a truck that they use to lift food normally. It's like a fork lift that they lift the food supplies onto an airplane with. They backed it up to the rear door, and I can remember how astonished I was, having come down the front ramp, to see Bobby Kennedy appear in that rear door.

[Somehow he had bounded aboard that plane, probably by the rear door, just as we taxied up. And as soon as I got down on the ground and looked up to the rear door, there was Bobby with Larry O'Brien, Kenny O'Donnell, Dave Powers, and the other Kennedy people who had spent, by the way, the whole trip in that rear compartment. I think that Larry O'Brien was the only one of the holdover staff members who conferred on any substantive matters with the new President on the way back.

Then President Johnson, after this grey Navy ambulance had taken the casket, walked over to a battery of TV cameras and lights--by then it was dark, and things were a little eerie in that light--and read the statement he had prepared on the plane. I remember I was looking at [McGeorge] Mac Bundy because I was wondering if he had any word of what had happened in the world while we were in transit, whether this assassination was part of a plot. And he told me later that what he reported to the President during that flight back was that the whole world was stunned, but there was no evidence of a conspiracy at all.

MORRISSEY: During the two hours that you were airborne, was most of your time taken up with speculating with your colleagues about the overall context of the event?

ROBERTS: No, it wasn't. But for just one reason: We had so darn much work to do. Smitty, who won a Pulitzer Prize for his work that day, by the way, didn't have a typewriter. We had to get one of the White House typewriters, an electric typewriter which is not normally connected up in that forward compartment, and find an outlet for him to plug into. Then we pooled our notes, shared our notes. We agreed on the precise minute of the oath taking; he and I both had it at the same minute by our watches. Was it 2:57?

MORRISSEY: I don't recall.

ROBERTS: When we got to Washington, we found that our colleague, with whom we did not have a chance to pool notes, because he got off the plane in Dallas, had set the time of the oath at 2:56, and it was already on the wires as 2:56. Both of us stuck to 2:57.

After we got Smith the typewriter and got it connected, he started talking to Secret Service agents about how this was the second time he had returned to Washington with a dead president. He had ridden back from Warm Springs with FDR [Franklin Delano Roosevelt]. And I kept telling him, "Come on." We were flying at absolutely flank speed, and I kept telling him we had an awful lot of work to do.

We pooled our notes, and happily we agreed on just about everything. I think the only difference in our narratives was that he said President Johnson kissed Mrs. Kennedy. My distinct recollection is that he didn't. But that's about the only variation we had.

Then, as I said, two or three times the new President came to talk to us, once to tell us that he had called Mrs. Kennedy, Mrs. Rose Kennedy; once to tell us that he had talked to Mrs. Connally, I believe; and then to show us, read us, and then give us a copy of, the statement he was going to read on arrival at Andrews. I think that probably this was the only time in my life that I ever felt like saying to a President of the United States, "Look, I know you want to talk, but I've got a lot of work to do."

I felt so pressed by the amount of work I had to do that by the time we reached our altitude--our flying altitude--and could settle down to writing, it was just a photo-finish to get on paper what we had seen, heard, and observed since leaving the hospital, because, in effect, we were representing the whole world press. Whatever was written, at least that day, about both the swearing-in of the new President and this unprecedented flight back with the dead President, the new President, the new First Lady and the widow of the late President aboard, had to be written in that time. Perigd. I was still typing as we taxied up at Andrews, and Smitty was, too.

We flew in to the White House in a second helicopter. I think there were about four altogether. Ted Sorensen was on my helicopter. I had known Ted for the three years that Kennedy had been President, but I absolutely. . . . He was literally speechless. He was totally numb. He went out there, saw the casket taken away, and mechanically got aboard a helicopter and flew back to the White House, but absolutely seemed oblivious to people, events. Again, I think medically he was in a state of shock.

At the White House I filed a pool report with the White House press office there. Smitty went into the UP and went on writing. The President decided not to use President Kennedy's office, not to use the oval office--and did not for perhaps a week, I think, until all of President Kennedy's belongings had been removed--but went into the EOB, the Executive Office Building, next door.

He had thought of calling a Cabinet meeting that night, but there were so many cabinet members on that plane on the way to Japan that he didn't; at least it wasn't recorded as a Cabinet meeting. But he conferred with people for three or four hours there in his old vice presidential office before going out to the Elms.

Well, as far as my personal narrative is concerned, I went to Newsweek and wrote all of that night and was up all of the next day until 6 o'clock the next night. I got back over to the White House that Saturday morning at, I think, 10 o'clock, when they opened the East Room--not to visitors but to a handful of the press so that they could see how his body was to lie in state there in that interim period before the funeral.

MORRISSEY: When you were airborne and the President came up to speak to you, did he press you for information on what had happened? Did he think you had more knowledge about it than he did?

ROBERTS: No, no, he didn't. Actually, he was closer to the car in which the President was riding than any reporter, and saw more. He is the only President ever to see his predecessor murdered. I don't think anybody's ever talked to him about this, but he was as close an eyewitness as almost anyone in Dallas. There was just the security car between him and the Presidential car.

MORRISSEY: I was wondering about the identity of the assassin.

ROBERTS: It didn't come up. It really didn't. Now I think I heard before we were airborne that they were holding a man in Dallas, but there was no discussion of that on the plane except this speculation as to what was afoot--whether it was going to be one of those things like in Lincoln's day, when they in one night tried to kill several cabinet people as well as the President. But he certainly didn't ask our opinion on who we thought did it or anything like that.

I can remember that there was some disagreement on the number of shots fired--among the Secret Service agents, among the reporters. I don't remember what Smitty recalled, but I still heard only two shots, which means nothing. I don't know whether the one I missed was the first or the last. But I know that Ted [Chester V.] Clifton, who was President Kennedy's military aide and who stayed on as President Johnson's military aide, said he thought he heard four shots. He was a major general in the army.

So the confusion about what had happened was rampant that day and on that airplane. We've all learned so much by reading the Warren Commission Report and so on that it now seems like a kind of orderly procession of events-- this, this, and this happened. But, then, without many people pooling their knowledge as reporters did in Dallas, it was very hard to reconstruct what had happened.

This is why many of the early stories . . . If you look at both wire services of that night, starting from 12:30 p.m., their first bulletins after the shots were fired, you see many, many false leads, rumors that got on the wire, and bits of misinformation that were corrected sometimes within two or three minutes and sometimes rode all through the night on the wires. Except for the number of shots and some discussion of the direction from which they came--this, again, with the agents, not with the new President--there was no talk on the plane of who they had taken into custody or anything like that.

Speaking of the recollection of eyewitnesses not being always the best, you've heard it said that circumstantial evidence, good circumstantial evidence, is better than eyewitness testimony. I can remember back in that driveway at the hospital, Senator Yarborough, a very sober, intelligent, responsible man, at the same time he was telling me where the President was hit, saying, "It was awful. It was awful. I could smell the gunpowder." It clung to the car all the way to the hospital. Now this is patently impossible. The shots were fired from six stories up and a hundred yards or so

MORRISSEY: Was the major apprehension before the President arrived in Texas that he might be insulted the way Stevenson was?

ROBERTS: That's all I had thought of. You had the Stevenson incident which had occurred just two weeks before. And then you had the incident of Johnson and Lady Bird in Dallas, a day or so before the '60 election. Or was it the '62 election?

MORRISSEY: '60.

ROBERTS: The '60 election. They had been attacked by screaming right-wingers. I didn't think of it in terms of a risk to his life, I must confess. I remember in the course of the motorcade, before we got to downtown, as I recall, we passed General [Edwin A.] Walker's home, and somebody remarked that he lived over there a block or two, and this tended to remind me that we were in the heart of a stronghold of right-wing fanatics. But, again, I didn't think of it in terms of anybody shooting at the President.

MORRISSEY: There was some talk at the time, and some speculation since, the one reason President Kennedy went to Texas was to size up whether or not Lyndon Johnson could carry his own state on the bottom half of the ticket in 1964.

ROBERTS: I I don't believe that from what I knew then-- and I certainly don't believe it with hindsight. I think--and this is not entirely off the top of my head--I think that President Kennedy felt that, although you could never prove it mathematically, that Johnson might have made his election possible.

behind the car that Yarborough was riding in. He couldn't have smelled gunpowder. And yet the adrenalin, the excitement of the thing, gave him the impression; seeing a man shot, he thought he smelled gunpowder.

MORRISSEY: Coming into Dallas in the motorcade, did you think that, to that point, the President's mission in trying to patch up the feuds in the Texas Democratic party had been successful?

ROBERTS: We were not only under that impression, we had been told by some of the principals that this had had a therapeutic effect. Before leaving the Texan in Fort Worth we had a quick session with Connally, and Connally gave us to understand that his feud with Yarborough, that both the President and the Vice President coming there, had pretty well impressed them with the necessity of closing ranks, burying the hatchet.

The friendliness of that crowd in Dallas impressed me just as much, though, as the fact that he had apparently succeeded in that other mission. There were very few unfriendly signs, for example. I think I saw just two unfriendly signs all the way from the airport to the underpass. One of them, I remember, said, "Yankee go home." But on many motorcades, and in cities thought to be less hostile than Dallas, I had seen many more manifestations of unfriendliness than that.

This was a very warm, effusive crowd. It was about 76°, I think; it was kind of a shirt-sleeved crowd, and it really turned out to cheer this man. This was what we were talking about--even as they were talking about it, we now know, in the death car at almost the moment the shots were fired--what an authentically warm and spontaneous reception he had gotten.

MORRISSEY: In 1960?

ROBERTS: In '60. Certainly if he had opted to any of the other possibilities he considered, it's easy to make a case that he would not have won, that he would not have carried Texas, for example. And it's unthinkable. . . . Roosevelt did it, did it twice--but in modern context and given a President any less powerful than Roosevelt, I just can't see a President after one term dumping a Vice President who has done nothing wrong. I just think that's the wildest kind of speculation on somebody's part. I'm sure that Jack Kennedy never said, "I'm going to see whether Johnson could again carry his own state."

MORRISSEY: I've heard it said that the relationship between Kennedy and Johnson was much better than the relationship between Johnson and Kennedy's staff.

ROBERTS: Well, I don't think either of those relationships was warm or cordial, but I think that what you said is true.. The relationship between the two men, although there was not a great deal of contact, was on a friendlier basis than that of their staffs. There were people on Kennedy's staff who really never got over Los Angeles. They went through all the primaries of '60 with Johnson as the man to beat, the man to stop, as their mortal enemy. And after the victory, for some reason, they still regarded him, well, as a guy who should be watched. He didn't really have entree to the White House the way, for example, Hubert Humphrey has it as Johnson's Vice President. There was a little lingering enmity for some reason. Perhaps they didn't trust him. I don't know. But I would say that his relationship with Kennedy was better.

MORRISSEY: It appears to an outsider like myself that the Kennedy staff was a fairly unified outfit. But, again, I've been told that there were very definite dissensions among people on the staff itself.

ROBERTS: Well, there were. You had the eggheads and you had the Irish mafia. And then there were minor splits, or differences, misunderstandings between the eggheads, and there were definitely splits among the so-called Irish Mafia. I don't think it's a secret any longer that Larry O'Brien and Kenny O'Donnell were not on friendly terms at the time of Dallas.

They all worked with a singleness of purpose as far as serving Kennedy was concerned. There was no question about that. There was no grandstanding or nobody running a show of his own, for purposes other than serving Kennedy. But they simply had different ideas on how it ought to be done. And I think, inevitably, after three years, some noses were out of joint. Some people were by then closer to the President than others. Some were a lot closer than they had been, say, during the primary fights, when Kennedy really gathered that staff around him.

There were people who had been with Kennedy in the Senate, who had been with him on his Senate staff, who had virtually disappeared as far as doing responsible chores for Kennedy. Ted Reardon is an example of that-- still liked by the President but just not in as far as important staff work was concerned.

Kenny O'Donnell was a little jealous of who saw the President. As his appointments secretary, he felt that he was a gatekeeper, and he took seriously the idea that he should ration the President's time. But President Kennedy, unlike Ike [Dwight D. Eisenhower] before him or Johnson after him, operated with an open door policy whereby almost any member of his staff above the rank of corporal could walk in almost any time of day, unless he was actually in conference or something like that, and confer with him. When Kenny blocked the door through the appointment secretary's office, then they went around through the other door, through Evelyn Lincoln's office. So that is an example of the kind of thing that brought on some of these differences. O'Donnell getting, perhaps, overprotective of the President, with the best of intentions, but bruising some feelings in the process.

MORRISSEY: Had you traveled on previous trips with Kennedy?

ROBERTS: Oh, yes. I think I'd made every trip he had made except perhaps one or two weekends in Hyannis and his summit trip. That was, perhaps, the most important trip he made, but I did not make it because Ben [Benjamin] Bradlee, who was Newsweek's Bureau Chief then, and who was an old friend of the President's, opted to cover that one. But I made his trip to Germany, Italy, Ireland, and UK [United Kingdom], and dozens and dozens of trips across the country. Hyannis and Palm Beach and, toward the end, Palm Springs, were sort of like a second homes to all of us.

He traveled a lot. This has been said about other presidents, mainly his predecessor, but I think that getting out of Washington, and getting into a warm climate, getting to some place where you can relax, [is beneficial to Presidents.] The main thing that you really shut off by getting out of Washington is callers--because when the President is out of town Congressmen simply know by reading the newspapers that they can't call up and demand time. And this is what gives a President many more hours to relax, or just to think, than he can salvage when he's sitting at his desk in Washington.

MORRISSEY: On some of these trips did questions of proper security for the President arise?

ROBERTS: Well, they did occasionally. In the first place, whenever he traveled, it was like a campaign trip. He never got off an airplane. . . . For example, if there were as many as a few hundred people, even, who had turned out in any little town in the country to see him at any hour of the night, he would go over and do what we used to call the "fence bit." He would go up and down the chain link fence at an airport shaking hands. And, obviously, a crowd like that just can't be screened.

There's really no such thing as absolute security for a President, except, as many people have pointed out, if you put him in a Sherman tank and keep him there, or put him under glass or behind bullet-proof glass wherever he appears. But if a President is going to campaign, if he's going to go out and make fund-raising speeches, if he's going to shake hands with crowds--and they expect it--there's no way of screening thousands and thousands of people who line city streets or go to airports. You'd have to occupy a city like Dallas if you were going to have complete security.

I think somebody figured there were two hundred thousand windows along the parade route he took. Well, you'd need a couple of divisions to cover, say, every tenth window, and then they'd have to be airborne divisions because on a trip like that they'd have to leapfrog ahead of him to establish the kind of security that some people think you can have. So every now and then maybe a nut would run into the street or there would be some kind of an incident. I don't remember any out of the ordinary. [security problems] before Dallas. I don't think the Secret Service thinks there was ever anything even resembling a real bona fide effort to get at President Kennedy.

Now, one exception comes to mind--the old house painter from New Hampshire who went down to Palm Beach and rigged a car with explosives like a battering ram that would detonate. And he was going to ram the Kennedy car as it left Ambassador Kennedy's house on Ocean Drive. He went there, parked across the street undetected one day, and saw I believe, Mrs. Kennedy, Caroline, and John John leave. He made up his mind that he just couldn't do that [kill them], but he was going to be parked there another day and ram the President's car when he was alone, when he didn't have his wife and children with him.

Then the intelligence reports on this guy caught up, and they nabbed him on one of the bridges or causeways. Looking for a New Hampshire license, as I recall, they spotted him by his license and caught him coming over from West Palm Beach to Palm Beach in a car loaded with dynamite. That's a glaring exception, so I'll back up and say that's the only major threat to his security that I'm aware of.

MORRISSEY: Did he [the President] indicate to you either directly or indirectly that he was reading carefully the stuff you were publishing?

ROBERTS: Oh, yes. Always.

MORRISSEY: How?

ROBERTS: Well, sometimes it would be, "That was a pretty good piece you had this week." You could count on that, almost, if it was a complimentary piece. He always made the point, if the story was critical, or seemed to be critical. . . . If he felt it was critical: "You don't have the information that I do." It wouldn't always be a personal thing. Sometimes he would say: "Your magazine doesn't understand this situation as fully as we do, or it couldn't be raising that question or taking the position it has."

Of course, he had read the newsmagazines. He ~~didn't~~ read U.S. News [and World Report] if you believe Ted Sorensen's book, but he did read Time and Newsweek--cover to cover. And he was so perceptive about the changing line in Time that when Otto Fuerbinger, who had been on leave from Time, returned from leave, he accosted Hugh Sidey at the Palm Beach airport one night when we met him there. We would usually fly in, oh, half an hour ahead of him so that cameramen would have time to set up their cameras. We were waiting at the foot of the ramp once in Palm Beach, and he said, to Sidey, "Otto Fuerbinger must be back." And sure enough, Sidey told me, Fuerbinger was back and Time that week, after being very friendly for some time, had suddenly taken a very critical turn. And Sidey said that the President, so far as he knew, had no way of knowing that Otto Fuerbinger was back in New York except by reading the magazine.

Actually, we had more opportunity to talk to him in situations like that--on the road, out of town, in Palm Beach, sometimes Hyannis and at Palm Springs--in a relaxed way, without a list of callers waiting and so on, than we did when he was at the White House. This is where that sort of banter would occur.

There is a picture up there taken in Hyannis the day he met Mike [Lester] Pearson, the Canadian Prime Minister--the top one up there. It was a very cold day at the Cape and, apparently, it had been a very cold day in Ottawa. Kennedy brought Pearson down to talk to us from that porch of the house. As they got down there, I remember I said to Pearson, "It looks like you brought your Canadian weather with you." And he said, "Oh, yes, it's miserable here, and it was miserable in Ottawa, too." He slandered the climate in two cities in one swoop. We sort of chuckled, and Kennedy said, "It takes years of diplomatic training to make a statement like that."

This is the sort of small talk that we had a lot of on the road but not so much of in Washington. At repartee, of course, Kennedy was tremendous, extremely quick. I wish I could remember some of the hundreds of unrecorded wisecracks he got off in situations like that.

MORRISSEY: Some wit commented that when he was President, it was the only time that the ship of state leaked from the top.

ROBERTS: It was true at the beginning. The way I see those three Kennedy years, when Kennedy came in, he was not like Ike, who had a general distrust of the press, or at least unfamiliarity with it and not much knowledge on how to deal with it. Ike turned the whole thing over to [James C.] Hagerty. In the case of Kennedy, he knew many of us. We were his age, and he had confidence that he could talk to us straightaway and that his confidence would be observed--that if he was talking off the record it would stay off the record, or that it would not be attributed if he said "This is for background" or "not for attribution."

He knew all the rules. He was in many ways his own press secretary. But he did start out to try to cultivate and woo the press, the White House correspondents, as individuals, by talking to them separately, occasionally giving them a lead or a story and by arguing his case. But he found that--this sounds self-serving on the side of the press, but I just think it's the truth--he found that you cannot consistently get a good press or nail a paper to your side simply by showing it kindness and keeping up good personal contact with its correspondents.

So at the end he was spending much less time explaining himself to us and certainly less time wooing us--by which I mean simply talking to us individually and trying to see that we saw things his way. In the end, I think he found that the most comfortable relationship with reporters is at arm's length. And I think that is the most comfortable relationship from a reporter's standpoint, too. A reporter simply can't be an advocate. He can't adopt any president--he can't work for him. He's got to maintain his independence.

So, as you suggest, the President started out leaking at the top. He was the biggest leak in the White House, although Ted Sorensen said he never leaked anything but what he wanted to see it printed. But at the end he was spending much less time on that sort of thing. And I think everybody was better off for it.

MORRISSEY : It's my understanding that during his Administration a reporter could go directly to a member of the White House staff for a story and that this procedure was not necessarily objectionable to the President.

ROBERTS: No. No. It was encouraged. This was Pierre Salinger's big point when the argument came up over news management, when Kennedy was accused of announcing good news at the White House but either suppressing or seeing that some lower department of government put out the bad news.

Pierre made the argument that the number of handouts that the White House puts out--even the number of press conferences the President has--is not so important as the accessibility of the people around the President to reporters. A tremendously valid point. You can't--if you're going to interpret and understand what the President is trying to do--take the statement he makes at the beginning of a press conference or an offhand answer that he gives in a press conference and write intelligently. You need more understanding than that of what options he faced, what the reasoning was, what brought him around to the decision that he ultimately made. Occasionally you could get to the President. But it's more useful really--because you can take longer and develop things more--to talk to the men around him, the men who help make policy and know why decisions were made, and why some things were done and others were not done. On a story, for example, on how a bill got through Congress, who the President had to work on to line them up, what arguments he used.

On accessibility, Kennedy, with Salinger, as his press secretary, established this. There were times when the accessibility was trimmed a little, for a particular publication. If it got rough on Kennedy, it would find that the doors were closed or that the people who were willing to have lunch the week before suddenly had a full calendar--which is understandable, I guess.

Covering the White House under Ike with Hagerty was like a funnel with Hagerty controlling the funnel. The members of the President's staff almost literally wouldn't tell you the time of day unless you called Hagerty and got permission to talk to this man or that man--people like Bob [Robert E.] Merriam, Jerry [Gerald D.] Morgan, General [Wilton Burton] Persons. Sherman Adams was the only man other than Hagerty who on his own could talk to reporters to explain, amplify, or discuss what Ike was doing.

So we had a revolution in covering the White House under Kennedy. Where with Ike you almost literally sat around the White House waiting for Hagerty to draw back the curtain a little and put out a few handouts, and only by great enterprise could you occasionally get to somebody for further background, when Kennedy came along the doors opened, the asbestos curtain parted. We called it the asbestos curtain because in Ike's years, the early days of Ike and back in Truman days, you could see who was going in and out of the President's office sitting in the White House lobby. Well, they put in a wall, which may or may not have been made of asbestos, but they put in a wall which cut off our view. We called that the asbestos curtain, and after that asbestos curtain dropped, we couldn't even see who was coming and going, let alone talk to them or talk to the people on the staff.

On accessibility, Kennedy showed not only understanding of our problem, but got a better press because we were kept informed.

MORRISSEY: What are your feelings about the charges of managed news then?

ROBERTS: Well, I think they were just as true in the Kennedy years as they were in the Eisenhower years and as they are in the Johnson years. By whatever name you call it--censorship, managed news, manufactured news, news blackout; you get a different phrase from time to time--every President and every Presidential press secretary works hard at trying to make the President look like a great president and obfuscating or minimizing all of his reverses and setbacks.

That's been going on for a long, long time. Every now and then it gets a little more flagrant, and then you will have a chorus of editorials and columns, and the policy will change. Pierre tried it; Hagerty tried it; [George E.] Reedy and [Bill] Moyers have tried it. It's what they are there for practically. It's the role of the press secretary.

During Kennedy's term, there was a more serious charge of news management on the Cuba missile crisis, where Art [Arthur] Sylvester, the public affairs officer at the Pentagon, said that--his words were something like, "We used news as a weapon during the crisis." Well, everybody knew this, but Sylvester, in an unguarded moment, I guess, said it out loud, and this brought down a great chorus of editorial condemnation. But you did have, in that crisis, a situation where what we said we were doing, what we said we were going to do, on an almost minute by minute time table, the fate of the world, perhaps, was hanging in the balance. And I don't think anybody would have faulted Kennedy--I don't think anybody did--for not telling everything he knew and everything he planned to do from hour to hour in that crisis.

There are times, obviously, when the national security is at stake, where the President, at least during that sort of crisis, can't even level with the American people, let alone make his knowledge and his intentions available to the enemy. So that's another aspect of news management.

MORRISSEY: This may be a bit afield from your firsthand observation, but some people have pointed out that if Eisenhower had campaigned more vigorously in 1960, perhaps he could have affected the margin.

ROBERTS: I spent that '60 campaign with Ike except for about ten days with Kennedy and about ten days or two weeks with Nixon. My impression is that Ike did think that Nixon was a shoo-in. Furthermore, he did not like campaigning. I think if he had made many speeches as hard hitting as his Philadelphia speech, which came very late in the campaign, if you remember, and had really laid his prestige on the line in behalf of Nixon, well, with a margin of only 118,000 votes, you could easily make a case that the election might have gone the other way.

Neither of them [Kennedy or Nixon] had anything like the popularity, the pulling power, the charisma of Ike in 1960. In fact, if you remember, Kennedy's crowds didn't start to pick up until after the TV debates. I know from people who went the whole route with him, even after the primaries you still had people [in Kennedy crowds] saying, "Which one is Kennedy?" Ike was the greatest vote getter since FDR at that time. Unquestionably, he could have helped Nixon more. Whether it was his dislike of campaigning or whether Nixon felt he had to make it on his own and felt he could make it, I don't know. Maybe history will tell us that. I've never seen it explained, to tell you the truth. That campaign with Ike [for Nixon] was sort of a non-campaign campaign. He went out like once a week. He never did really hit the road.

MORRISSEY: You don't recall either Ike or Nixon speaking about this?

ROBERTS: No. I do remember Ike saying once, "I'm doing just what they want me to." But whether that is literally true, I don't know. I know that people around Ike got panicky toward the end of the campaign and urged him to get out and make tougher speeches than the speeches he was making. He was pretty bland, if you remember, in the early part of that campaign.

MORRISSEY: Why don't we knock it off there.

ROBERTS: All right.

MORRISSEY: I think there might be some more things, but it's a little after 11 o'clock.

TO: NATION
FROM: ROBERTS
RE: KENNEDY EYEWITNESSER

Standing in the rear of his open-top 21-foot-long midnight blue limousine as it cruised down Main Street in Dallas shortly after noon ~~on~~ last Friday, John F. Kennedy was enjoying one of the few moments of pleasure that are afforded Presidents of the United States.

In the second and last day of a five-city "non-political" swing through Texas, he was receiving the acclaim of a city that voted overwhelmingly against him (by 61,000 votes) in 1960 and yet was tendering him a warm, effusive welcome.

With his stunning wife at his side, having proven herself a powerful campaigner at three previous stops, the President had every reason to believe that his trip to Texas was going to be a resounding success. He had not only been cheered lustily at nonpartisan gatherings where he preached the gospel of the New Frontier, but there was some evidence that he had persuaded the state's feuding Democrats to patch up, ~~their quarrels~~ or at least patch over their differences.

On the press bus, half a block behind Mr. Kennedy's car, there had been some speculation as to how Dallas, a stronghold of right-wing radicals--extremists who had recently battered and spat on Adlai Stevenson--would receive the President. (more)

eyewitnesser 2

Mr. Kennedy was on his way to the Dallas Trade Mart to deliver a speech denouncing the radical right. But, strangely, we had seen few signs denouncing him, along the 10-mile motorcade route. One non-admirer had waved a ~~SIGN~~ hand-lettered sign urging "Yankee Go Home." Another brandished a placard that said "Can the Clan!"

As the 12-car motorcade prodded its way through the cheering, shirt-sleeved crowd on Main, with motorcycle police outriders ahead and the "Queen Mary," a bullet- and almost bomb-proof security car rolling along behind the President, a local reporter assured ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ me:

"The Dallas cops learned their lesson on that one (the assault on Stevenson). They won't let anybody get within ten feet of the President today."

Minutes later the President of the United States lay dying on the rear seat of his car, victim of an assassin who never got within 100 yards of him.

The killer struck so quickly and so surreptitiously that not one of the 36 Secret Service agents ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ or ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ 58 newsmen accompanying the President ever saw him. In the first panicky seconds after the President was hit few could agree on how many shots were fired--two or three--~~and~~ or from what direction they came.

None but those closest to the President's car realized he had been fired upon until several seconds after we heard the shots.

eyewitnesser 3

Sitting in the front seat of the bus, I heard just two reports.

"That sounded like gunfire," ~~said~~ the reporter next to me observed, almost casually.

At that instant I saw a man who had been cheering the President dive to the ground, sprawling over what appeared to be a small daughter.

"My God, it was!" I said, or think I said.

As I grabbed the handrail in front of me and half rose from my seat I saw a uniformed policeman running across the park to the left of the President's car with drawn pistol. The motorcade, which had been moving at about 25 miles an hour, ground to an uncertain halt.

"What's going on?" someone screamed from the back of the bus. At that moment I saw a photographer ~~sizzgling~~ struggle up a bank to the right of the President's car, ducking his head as if under fire, and ~~amzhez~~ a motorcycle policeman ram his three-wheeled machine over a curb in hot pursuit of what must have been an imaginary gunman. As his wheel righted itself he, too, pulled a pistol from his holster.

In nine years of covering Presidential parades I had often seen firecrackers cause momentary alarms among the President's bodyguards. Now I was convinced these were not firecrackers. But I still somehow dismissed the idea that the President had actually been //shot.//

(more)

eyewitnesser 4

I tried to focus on the President's car, downhill from the bus and near Dallas' complicated "triple underpass." I saw a car pulling away from a jumbled mass of men and machines at high speed. ~~XXXXXXXX~~ I remember trying to count the number of heads visible in the car but have no recollection of how many I saw. Perhaps I was looking at the "Queen Mary," the 8,700-pound open security car that hightailed after the President's limousine as it sped off to Parkland Hospital. In any case I shall forevermore be wary of witnesses who remember precise details of a tragedy.

"Jesus, let's get out here!" shouted another correspondent. We were all now pressing a bug-eyed toward the door of the bus.

The lumbering bus was far behind the White House cars as it lurched ahead. Losing sight of them, and having no idea then ~~where~~ where the President had gone, we sped to the Trade Mart, where the President was to ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ speak.

"Where's the President?" we demanded, bursting into the hall. Two thousand ~~xxxxxxxx~~ (please check number) Dallas citizens were sitting placidly around a beautiful water fountain, waiting to lunch with Mr. Kennedy. They had no inkling he would never arrive, and stared at us in blank wonder. It seemed unreal.

I ran into a parking lot and found a motorcycle cop straining to unscramble a babel of voices crackling out of his police radio. "They shot him," he told me before I could open my mouth. "He's gone to Parkland Hospital." (more)

eyewitnesser 5

As I ran for the street, still lugging my typewriter, I heard the police radio say, "There is no description of the gunman."

In front of the Mart I ran--almost literally--into President Kennedy's personal physician, Rear Admiral George Burkley. Like the wayward press bus, he had lost the President. Carrying his black bag, he had just talked a policeman into driving him to the hospital.

"Let me go with you," I begged. Quite understandably he slammed the car door in my face. Then, miraculously, a police sergeant ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ walked into the street and commandeered for me a passing car--driven by a Mexican-American woman I shall never forget.

"I'll get you there," she pledged as she zoomed into ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ the boulevard over which the dying President had passed minutes before.

From the hospital gate, where police stopped her car, I ran to the rear of the rambling 607-bed yellow brick hospital. Reporters, in the first minutes after the President's arrival, were barred from the building.

At the emergency admitting platform, under a neon sign that said "Ambulances Only," three Secret Service agents were swabbing blood ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ from the back seat of the President's car and putting up its fabric top--a roof that would have concealed Mr. Kennedy from his assassin's gunsight.

kennedy eyewitness 6

"Why now?" I asked an agent I knew, forgetting for a ~~XXXXXX~~ bitter moment that every President since McKinley had ridden in open cars. The three tops for the President's car--~~xxxxxx~~ the fabric job, a metal ^{roof} ~~top~~ capable of stopping bullets, and a transparent plastic "bubble" capable of deflecting them--were seldom used. On a sunny 76-degree day in Dallas, Tex., President Kennedy wouldn't have considered using any of them.

"You can't look," the Secret Service man said numbly, trying to conceal a blood-soaked bouquet of flowers on the floor. The instinct to protect the President's privacy lingered even ~~xxxxxx~~ as he lay dying. Nearby/I spotted, ^{,standing in the driveway,} Sen. Ralph Yarborough of Texas, who had been riding ~~EH~~ with Lyndon Johnson in an open car ~~EHXX~~ immediately behind the security car that tailed the President. He seemed dazed.

"I counted three shots," he said over and over again. "They carried him in. The President is hurt bad."

Where was the wound?

"I can't tell you," ^{he answered,} /unconsciously holding his hand to the right side of his head, where he had seen blood streaming from the President. "This is a deed that's indescribable."

"I heard three shots and then saw a Secret Service man beat his hand on the rear of the car. I

eyewitness. 8

The President, as always, was in the right rear seat, with Jackie at his side. Gov. Connally sat on the jump seat in front of the President, with Mrs. Connally on the ~~the~~ jump seat in front of Mrs. Kennedy.

A younger, athletic agent, Clint Hill, was riding on a footstep at the left rear fender of the car-- a step designed for bodyguards protecting the rear of the limousine.

"I remember they were talking in the back seat," the agent recalled. "I don't know what about. Then we heard these shots. I think I felt a thud. When I looked the President was down and Connally was slumped over the seat."

Hill, following secret service doctrine, leaped from the rear of the car into the back seat to blanket the President from another shot. Mrs. Kennedy, screaming ^{already shielded} "Oh, no, oh, no!" had ~~shielded~~ him with her body.

Suddenly agents from both cars were yelling, "Down, Down," ordering the Vice President and other dignitaries toward the front of the motorcade to duck out of range of the unseen sharpshooter.

Greer, after a momentary pause, ^{also} ~~then~~ followed doctrine, gunning the big car to put distance between the President and his assailant as quickly as possible.

"There was nothing we could do," the agent moaned, turning away. "Nothing. I can't talk about it."

eyewitness 10

Within minutes of that announcement we learned, unofficially, that ~~xxxxxx~~ John F. Kennedy was dead. A crying nurse "knew" it. A resident surgeon had called his wife to tell her. A priest confirmed it. "I think it's true but I can't say anything," said an assistant administrator.

It was a truth no one who had covered President Kennedy for three years could accept. It //couldn't// be true. Like him or not, he was too young, too vital, too important to die. Many reporters, ^{not facing deadlines,} sat numbly with heads in their hands.

Then, at 1:33 p.m. Assistant White House Press Secretary ~~MISSIX~~ Malcolm Kilduff pushed into the room with a piece of note paper in one hand and an unlighted cigarette in the other. Standing at a greasy metal counter in front of the classroom blackboard, Kilduff, red-eyed and tremulous, read slowly from the paper: "President John F. Kennedy died at approximately 1 p.m., Central Standard Time, today here in Dallas. He died of ^a gunshot in the brain."

"Oh, God," a hardboiled newsman cried. Then there was bedlam as the roomful of reporters scrambled for telephones and pressed Kilduff for details.

Half an hour later, at 2:04 p.m., I stood in the corridor outside the emergency room, pinned against the tile wall by a policeman, as the President's dark bronze coffin was wheeled out of the hospital he had entered just 90 minutes earlier.

eyewitness 11

Jackie Kennedy, still wearing the raspberry-colored wool suit and matching pillbox hat in which she had started the day's campaigning--and still looking beautiful--walked slowly beside the casket, her right hand resting gently on it.

Less than three hours earlier, while she was shaking hands with greeters at the Dallas airport, I had asked her how she liked campaigning. "It's wonderful," she beamed. Now, if she saw me at all, there was no glimmer of recognition. Her nose were smeared and her skirt spattered with ~~blood~~ her husband's blood. Her eyes seemed glazed. She was undoubtedly in shock.

As hospital attendants and White House aides slid the heavy coffin into a white hearse she stopped briefly to talk to a priest. Then she climbed into the grey-curtained car, scornning the front seat in order to sit by the casket.

A white-jacketed attendant ~~gently~~ quietly closed the rear door. The President and his wife had begun their last trip together.

* * *

POOL REPORT - DALLAS TO WASHINGTON, November 22, 1963

Lyndon B. Johnson was sworn in as the 36th President of the United States at 2:38 p.m. (cst) Friday -- just 98 minutes after President Kennedy died -- in a crowded compartment aboard Air Force One, the Presidential plane, at Love Field, Dallas.

The President repeated the oath solemnly, almost inaudibly, with his right hand upraised and his left hand on a small leather Bible. At his right side in the crowded, sweltering compartment was his wife, Lady Bird. Jacqueline Kennedy stood at his left. Below, in the baggage compartment of the plane, was a bronze casket containing the body of President Kennedy (correction: casket was in rear compartment of the aircraft) which had been placed aboard the plane a few minutes earlier for return to Washington.

Twenty-seven persons -- all that could crowd into the President's gold-carpeted private quarters in the midsection of the big jet plane -- witnessed the two-minute ceremony.

The oath was administered by U. S. District Judge Sarah T. Hughes, of Dallas, a longtime friend and political ally of the new President. The tiny, 47-year old jurist, one of the few women on the federal bench, could scarcely be heard above the whine of jet engines, as she read to the President:

"I do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the office of the President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."

The new President repeated the words after her in a low, but firm voice, adding, "So help me God." He then turned and kissed his wife, whose eyes were brimming, on the forehead. In the second of silence that ensued Mrs. Johnson stepped forward and clasped the hand of Mrs. Kennedy.

"The whole nation mourns your husband," she said.

Though dry-eyed, Mrs. Kennedy seemed barely in control of herself as President Johnson turned and clasped her hand.

As President Johnson turned to shake other hands, Dallas Police Chief K. J. E. Curry, who had driven him to Love Field from the hospital, said to Mrs. Kennedy: "God bless you little lady, but you ought to go back and lie down."

"No thanks, I'm fine," Mrs. Kennedy replied, mustering a faint smile. Moments later she left the compartment, a conference room just forward of the President's bedroom, and retired to an aft compartment of the plane containing President Kennedy's casket. She spent most of the return flight to Washington in that compartment alone with the bronze coffin.

At 2:41 p.m., after shaking the hands of Texas Congressmen, members of President Kennedy's staff and the three newsmen in the compartment, Mr. Johnson gave his first order as President. "Now Let's get airborne," he said. 52

A few officials not returning to Washington scrambled off the plane. Assistant White House Press Secretary Malcolm Kilduff phoned a report to newsmen at Parkland Hospital that President Johnson had taken office. The big blue and white Presidential fan jet, carrying the new chief executive and the body of his predecessor, was airborne at 2:47 p.m. cst -- just nine minutes after President Johnson was sworn in.

MORE

-2-

As the plane taxied away from the Love Field terminal it left behind only a few Dallas policemen and a white hearse where just three hours before President Kennedy and his wife had walked along a chain link fence shaking hands with hundreds of admirers who had turned out to welcome them to Dallas. As they walked down that fence I had asked Mrs. Kennedy how she liked campaigning.

"It's wonderful," she replied.

President Johnson, wearing a dark grey checked suit, sped from Parkland Hospital to Love Field, at about 2:00 p.m., with the Dallas police chief as his chauffeur. His destination was not announced at that time for security reasons.

Once aboard Air Force One, which was under heavier-than-usual security guard, he determined to delay his swearing in ceremony until Mrs. Kennedy arrived.

President Kennedy's body was removed from the hospital at 2:04 p.m. The casket was carried aboard the plane through the rear door by secret service agents at 2:13 p.m. Mrs. Kennedy, who rode to the airport in the hearse in the rear compartment with the casket, followed it up the rear ramp, accompanied by members of the White House staff. She was wearing the same strawberry colored two-piece wool suit in which she made her first appearance of the day at Fort Worth.

When three "pool" newsmen, including this correspondent, were allowed aboard the curtained plane at about 2:30 p.m., Mr. Johnson was in the 12 by 15 foot conference room conferring with three Democratic Texas Congressmen -- Reps. Homer Thornberry, Albert Thomas and Jack Brooks.

Normally a jovial, outgoing man, Mr. Johnson seemed subdued and was speaking almost in a whisper. The compartment, containing four gold upholstered seats at a conference table on one side and two seats on the opposite side was already crowded, but the President said, "If there's anybody else aboard who wants to see this tell them to come in."

Lawrence O'Brien, President Kennedy's legislative liaison aide, entered the conference room from the sleeping compartment aft and handed Mr. Johnson a small, leather-bound Bible, apparently one that was kept aboard the plane by President Kennedy.

While he waited for Mrs. Kennedy, the new President spotted President Kennedy's secretary, Mrs. Evelyn Lincoln, in the room and kissed her hand. Assistant White House Press Secretary held a microphone near the President's mouth to record his oath.

Standing behind him when he took the oath were Mrs. Lincoln; Rear Admiral George Burkley, President Kennedy's personal physician (his shirt cuffs still bloodstained from attending Mr. Kennedy's head wound); Major General Chester V. Clifton, President Kennedy's military aide; Police Chief Curry; the Texas Congressmen and other members of both the President's; and Vice President's staffs.

At 3:40 p.m., with Air Force One flying toward Washington at a flank speed of 635 miles per hour, President Johnson issued his first statement as chief executive. It said:

"This is a sad time for all people. We have suffered a loss that cannot be weighed. For me it is a deep personal tragedy. I know the world shares the sorrow that Mrs. Kennedy and her family bear. I will do my best. That is all I can do, I ask for your help -- and God's."

MORE

During the flight the President called Mrs. Rose Kennedy, mother of his slain predecessor, and Mrs. Nellie Connally, wife of the Texas governor who was also hit by the Kennedy assassin.

He made plans to fly directly to the White House from Andrews Air Force Base for a series of meetings. Going first to his old office in the Executive Office Building, he planned to meet with members of the White House staff. He also planned to meet with Congressional leaders of both parties, and then with any members of the Cabinet available in Washington. (Secretaries Fusk, Dillon, Odall and Hodges are returning from Honolulu tonight.)

His first purpose in calling the meetings, Assistant News Secretary Kilduff said, was "to ask all of them to remain in their posts."

Mrs. Kennedy remained in the rear compartment with the casket throughout the flight. 54

Air Force One landed at Andrews at 5:59 p.m. EST.

It was learned later that four aides of President Kennedy sat with Mrs. Kennedy and the casket in the rear of Air Force One during the return trip to Washington.

They were Appointments Secretary Kenneth O'Donnell, Legislative Liaison Chief Lawrence O'Brien, White House Doorkeeper David Powers and Brig. Gen. Godfrey McHugh, the late President's Air Force Aide.

Both Mrs. Kennedy's legs were stained and her dress was spattered with blood. Secret Service Agents reported that she threw herself over his body when he slumped down in the rear seat of the President's open "bubbletop" car after he was hit by the assassin's bullet.

During the flight arrangements were made to take President Kennedy's body to the Bethesda Naval Hospital by ambulance upon arrival at Andrews.

When President Johnson called Mrs. Rose Kennedy from his plane at 4:15 p.m. CST, he said: "I wish to God that there was something I could do. I just wanted you to know that."

He then told the dead President's mother that Mrs. Johnson wanted to talk to her. "We feel like the heart has been cut out of us," Mrs. Johnson sobbed. "Our love and our prayers are with you."

Fifteen minutes later President Johnson called the wife of Gov. Connally at Parkland Hospital.

"We are praying with you, darling," he told her, "and I know that everything is going to be all right, isn't it."

The President added: "Give him (the governor) a hug and a kiss for me."

Before the President's plane landed at Andrews it was learned that the Cabinet officers who were enroute to Japan had turned around in midair and were to return to Washington at about 12 midnight EST.

Not covering arrival at Andrews as it was staffed by all media.

CHARLES ROBERTS

June 24, 1959

MEMO TO KEN CRAWFORD:

RE: KENNEDY

At dinner last night Jack Kennedy was expansive on a number of subjects, including the Strauss nomination, other candidates for the Democratic nomination and the Nixon-Rockefeller fight.

First, on the Strauss nomination, he does not think the almost party-line vote is going to hurt the Democrats. Contrary to the belief that Lyndon Johnson made up his mind at the last minute, Kennedy says Lyndon had decided to vote against Strauss two weeks before the vote. Kennedy decided about 2 1/2 weeks before the vote--largely on the basis of the committee vote. The Democrats on the committee who voted against Strauss were "reasonable" men and if they opposed Strauss after hearing all the testimony, Kennedy was inclined to oppose him, too. He "read through" the hearings.

As far as the race for the Democratic nomination is concerned, Kennedy thinks he is the strongest candidate the Democrats could put up, Rockefeller the strongest the Republicans could name. He figures Adlai could beat Nixon, but it would take a fresh, vigorous personality to whip Rockefeller's fresh, vigorous personality and he figures he is the man. He regards Humphrey as the man he must beat in the primaries, then Symington as the man he must beat at the convention. He doesn't expect Lyndon to get much support, if any, outside the South. Johnson's votes have got to go somewhere, eventually, and this, by implication, is why Kennedy is not joining with the "liberals" in assailing Johnson's leadership. Stevenson would be the beneficiary if Kennedy and Humphrey knocked each other out.

Humphrey must enter primaries to win; he may even risk tackling Kennedy in New Hampshire he needs so desperately to establish himself as a vote getter. Kennedy feels he must enter some primaries and win to prove that his Catholicism is not the liability some Democrats think it is. He now expects to enter in New Hampshire, Maryland, Ohio (even if it means running against ~~Kennedy's~~ favorite son DiSalle) and Oregon, where it is almost impossible to stay off the ballot. He also expects to enter at least one farm state. He is eyeing Wisconsin (awaiting the outcome of the favorite son hassle there), Indiana and Nebraska. He is interested only in primaries that bind the delegates--and this rules out many of the popularity contest states.

Kennedy thinks foreign policy will be the big issue of the 1960 campaign in that the people will elect the man they think can best handle the Russians. This is in Adlai's favor; many people regard him as an authority on foreign policy.

(more)

kennedy 2

In this connection Kennedy admits he faces a tough problem: his boyish, young look. People seem to trust an older man more in the field on foreign affairs. In domestic affairs he figures his young look is an asset: people associate it with vigor and new ideas.

Kennedy thinks it is ironic that Stevenson and the Democratic Advisory Council have concentrated almost entirely on Europe in their policy pronouncements. He thinks the future ~~is~~ fight against communism is going to be fought in Asia and Africa--two continents on which he has tried to become expert. He has specialized in India and North Africa. He will go to Africa after Congress adjourns, probably visiting Morocco and Tunisia.

Getting back to domestic politics (this is the way the conversation rambled) Kennedy hopes to get to every state before the convention next summer. He is going to Ohio this weekend to visit DiSalle and try to talk him out of running as a favorite son. If DiSalle won't back out, Kennedy may enter against him. He doesn't know how Lausche would fit into such a battle.

Kennedy plans to declare himself a candidate in December or January--in time to line up delegates to go on the New Hampshire primary ballot.

He admits one of his weaknesses in the farm states, where farmers have been told time and again that he voted for flexible price ~~and~~ supports and know little else about him. He is now beginning to issue statements on farm problems, hoping they'll get on the wires, so that farmers will realize he has some interest in their welfare. He points out to farm audiences, whenever he gets a chance, that he voted for flexible price supports for big farmers, but on an amendment, tried to get rigid 90 per cent supports for small farmers.

Kennedy denies that he has paid agents in states like Wisconsin, where the mayor of Madison is managing his undeclared campaign. In Wisconsin, a few Democrats have raised a little money to back Kennedy. In New Hampshire and other states regular Democrats are spending their own time and money.

Kennedy rejects the idea that he must win on the first or second ballot or not win at all. He says he may go into the convention with the most votes, sees no reason why he can't gain after the first couple of ballots. "It may take three, four or five ballots."

Kennedy says Lyndon Johnson is running hard and now everyone knows it. Stevenson is not running. Kennedy has this from many of Stevenson's friends, some of whom are working for him, and believes it. However, Stevenson would still like to be President. Kennedy thinks Stevenson would run against Nixon, not against Rockefeller.

(more)

Kennedy thinks the crying need in the pre-convention fight among Democrats and then in the runoff against the Republicans is going to be the need for new ideas. He thinks the Democratic Advisory Council should be generating new ideas, new programs on health insurance and other domestic problems rather than grinding out foreign policy statements.

He is using up ideas, phrases, etc., at such a great rate--speaking twice or more every weekend--that he has enlisted the aid of a personal brain trust--half a dozen professors at Harvard and M.I.T. ~~Among his advisers:~~ Among his advisers: two former Stevenson advisers--Arthur Schlesinger Jr. and Kenneth ~~Smith~~ Calbraith. He even has a Republican law professor working for him--on some civil rights proposals.

He thinks Humphrey has a similar advisory group, perhaps at the University of Chicago or the University of Minnesota.

In this connection Kennedy fears over-exposure by convention time. He fears that he and Humphrey may be old hat ~~in~~ by the time the convention meets. He's sure Symington won't enter any primaries. Here again he repeats that he does not feel he has to fight Humphrey in a primary wherever Humphrey wants to fight (as Adlai took on Keef almost everywhere in 1956). One primary he won't enter, although it binds delegates: South Dakota, the state where Humphrey was born.

Kennedy agrees with the Dick Rovere thesis that this is his "last chance" for the Presidency, but he is not convincing. He says it would be impossible to remain in the Senate, take a stand on as many issues as would arise, etc., for another four years and still have appeal for a large number of voters. He is not convincing on this--or on the statement that he is not interested in the vice presidency under any circumstances. Under questioning he concedes that the Vice Presidency has made Nixon a ~~MINIMUM~~ Presidential candidate--a role he might never have achieved as a senator.

Kennedy denies that this "last chance" has anything to do with his health. He denies vehemently, and convincingly, that he has Addison's Disease, a drying-up of the adrenalin glands, as has been rumored. He says he once had an adrenalin deficiency, after his back operation, but it has been cleared up for years.

Kennedy obviously views Lyndon Johnson as an opportunist rather than a man of firmly embedded principles. He predicts Johnson and the liberals will wind up this session pretty close together on all issues but civil rights. He doesn't think Johnson's espousal of another civil rights bill will hurt him in the South. "The Southerners know his heart really isn't in it."

(more)

kennedy 4

In this connection, Kennedy is amazed and somewhat amused at the support thrown to him by Alabama's Governor Patterson. He attributes it to Patterson's political ineptitude and figures it may hurt Patterson when he, Kennedy, votes for civil rights legislation. He thinks Alabama will probably vote for Lyndon in the convention, Patterson notwithstanding.

Also in this connection, he had an amusing proposition made to him by another Alabama official who implied he might support him: "All we want," said the official, "is a friendly attorney general."

Kennedy still isn't sure whether his Catholicism will hurt, or how much. He tried to lay this problem to rest with his LOOK interview, in which he said he wouldn't be subject to the dictates of the Pope. But he was amazed just yesterday to have a Presbyterian youth group call on him and ask: "If the Pope wanted you to veto a bill that was against Catholic doctrine wouldn't you have to veto it?"

Kennedy unknowns who the Democrats will come up with in 1964 if Rockefeller beats them next year. As an historical aside, he says he thinks Philadelphia's Mayor Richardson Dilworth would be the front runner and probably the party's nominee next year if he had run for governor ~~instead of~~ of Pennsylvania instead of George Leader.

Kennedy's brother Bob will probably quit his committee job in a couple of months, then, after a vacation, come back as Kennedy's office manager for the Presidential campaign.

Kennedy is looking for a good campaign manager--a "Protestant Jim Farley.

For the campaign he is adding a farm expert to ~~his~~ his staff--one Bob Moses.

His father is encouraging him, but not taking a ~~strong~~ hand in his campaign. At the moment Kennedy Sr. is in Nevada, will spend the summer on the French Riviera.

ALL OF THE ABOVE IS ON A BACKGROUND, NOT-FOR-ATTRIBUTION BASIS.

CWR