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JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY AS SEEN BY
HIS CONTEMPORARY BIOGRAPHERS



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JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY AS SEEN BY
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JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY AS SEEN BY
HIS CONTEMPORARY BIOGRAPHERS

A Thesis

by

Nolan F. Ward

Submitted to the Graduate School
Prairie View Agricultural and Mechanical College
in Partial Fulfillment of the

Degree of

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N. F. W.

DEDICATION

This study is respectfully dedicated to the militant young black people who have at last found their identity in a mirror.

N. F. W.

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CHAPTER I

JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY AS SEEN BY HIS CONTEMPORARY BIOGRAPHERS

It was Camelot. Many Americans, prohibited by law from the titles of nobility, had embraced their young president in that very manner. The world had, in many ways, come to regard him in a fashion other than "just another American President." The Jacqueline Kennedy that D. W. Brogan claimed helped her husband in the 1960 campaign only by being pregnant had blossomed into a great political asset.¹ She had captivated the Spanish and French and had persuaded André Malroux to allow the first lady of the world, the Mona Lisa, to journey to the United States.² The Kennedy children, Caroline and John-John made the patter of tiny footsteps, so long absent in the White House, fondly remembered. They also made good copy for McCall's and other women's magazines that could now point to a first family with the accent on youth.³

¹D. W. Brogan, "The Power of Negative Thinking," The Spectator. No. 6903 (October 14, 1960), p. 553.

²"Life on the Newsfronts of the World," Life. LIV (January 18, 1963), p. 39.

³Christine Sadler, "McCall's Gallery of Children in the White House," McCall's, LXXIX (May, 1962), p. 87.

In every family there is death. A nation tends to grieve with its leaders in such times and the concern of millions was reflected during the loosing battle fought by little Patrick Bouvier Kennedy.⁴ When the baby died the political albatross of Roman Catholicism provided the nation with an almost regal funeral. Americans that were previously unexposed to the grandeur suddenly discovered how princes are buried.

Even Camelot had its dragons. Stephen Rousseas and James Fargavis wrote:

Early in his campaign of 1960, President Kennedy assumed the mantle, scepter and orb of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. He presented himself to the electorate in Roosevelt's image and proclaimed the New Frontier. Sounding very much like a committed ideologue with a vision, he vowed to get America moving again. That New Frontier, unlike the New Deal, bogged down in a series of debilitating political compromises in no way destroys the basic validity of President Kennedy's self identification with Roosevelt. Both are supreme examples of the non-committed, non-ideological politician acting strictly out of political expediency.⁵

This conflict between the deciples and critics has gone on now for over eight years. The biographers and chroniclers have in recent years begun to express their

⁴"Newsfronts," Life. LV (August 16, 1963), p. 28b.

⁵Stephen Rousseas and James Fargavis, "Politics of the Possible," Nation. CLXLVI (March 23, 1963), p. 242.

opinion on the "real" John F. Kennedy. The work, real, is of considerable importance. Ted Sorensen, often called the President's alter ego, is very careful about clearing up the issue of the Kennedy style. The Kennedy style became perhaps the most important part of the John F. Kennedy image. Sorensen claims:

"Most regrettable, in my view, are those memorials and tributes which speak more of his style than of his substance. The Kennedy style was special--grace, the wit, the elegance, the youthful looks will rightly long be remembered. But what mattered most to him, and what in my opinion will matter most to history, was the substance--the strength of his ideas and ideals, his courage and judgment. These were the pith and purpose of his Presidency, of which style was but an overtone."⁶

Arthur Krock, explains, "...the human race hungers for heroes, anthropomorphic like the gods among whom the ancient Greeks installed... So they became legends when they die, some while they are living. And the superior qualities that have made them heroes are lost for years, and even centuries in the sentimentality of the legend."⁷ It would seem that there arises a serious question as to

⁶Theodore C. Sorensen, Kennedy. New York: Harper and Row, 1965, p. 8.

⁷Arthur Krock in Kennedy Without Tears. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1964, p. 9.

whether history controls image making or image making controls history.

The study seeks to answer two fundamental questions and to shed some light on a third. The questions are:

1. What is the extent of prejudice held by the authors and what is its effect on the subject of their biographies?
2. What effect does participation in the life of the subject have on an author's biography?
3. Who and what was John Kennedy the politician, president, man, husband, father, intellectual, world hero, catholic and perhaps image?

This, then, is the problem.

The study is limited in three ways. It deals with Kennedy biographies written over the last nine years, (1959 to 1968). There will be, secondly, a segregation of authors into classes which indicate their competence to write on the subject. The third limitation will be the classification of authors into groups formed in relation to their closeness to the President. The scope is therefore narrowed as to time and author competence and purpose. Works of the non scholarly nature such as children's books and pictorial studies are legitimate expressions of attitudes held by the author and for our purposes are relevant.

The topical method of development will be used. This method facilitates easy accessability to the informa-

tion in that the biographies begin at various times during the subject's life and that the study is more concerned with biographers view of John Kennedy. The method will lend itself to author analysis and comparison better than a chronological approach.

There are thirty-two major studies that will be used in this study. Fourteen minor studies will be used in the text.⁸ These biographies and chronicles were selected because they represented a spectrum of the John Kennedy literature.

The following terms will be defined at this point:

Camelot. Term applied to the Kennedy Presidency. It infers that John Kennedy was Arthur, Jacqueline Kennedy his Queen and the cabinet, the Knights in armor. The American condition was a dragon and the assault was led by Arthur himself.

Charisma. A special quality of leadership that captures the popular imagination and inspires unswerving allegiance and devotion.

John F. Kennedy was a man that a person was either

⁸Minor studies are studies that were produced by commercial agencies and the media that were constructed for the purpose of being keepsakes. Among these works are paperback works such as There Once Was A President, J.F.K. in Memorium and The Last Day.

for or against. There could be no middle of the road. He was deified by those closest to him and cursed by those who stood at the outer door. This pattern is reflected in his biographies. The closest thing to an objective study is James MacGregor Burns' pre-assassination work, conceived by the Kennedy staff to stave off the expected rash of campaign biographies to appear in the 1960 campaign year. Burns, a noted historian, was perceptive and his work while not extremely critical was analytical.

It is the opinion of the writer that the office of the Presidency magnified John F. Kennedy far beyond justification. Kennedy had two important decisions to his credit and a number of follies. He was not an outstanding President, indeed there is some question as to whether he was an adequate one. He was, however, a man that came along at the right time in American history. He was a symbol of what many Americans thought an American President should be--young, quick witted, a family man, and a war hero.

Kennedy may be a tragic figure indeed. Joseph Sr., rejected by Franklin Roosevelt, gladly aided his son's campaign. The Joe Kennedy fostered "Kennedy competition" was an important factor in J. F. K.'s career. Five years later less-emotional scholars must wonder why Camelot and perhaps more specifically what Camelot.

CHAPTER II

THE TEAM THAT JACK BUILT

The United States had elected its President. Now a new chief would pick and choose, study and reject, agree upon and select those persons necessary to the construction of his government. It was a difficult task. John Kennedy, the new President, had been described as an intellectual and he proved it to the nations oldest university by creating Harvard on the Potomac. Their academic community was impressed but not pleased.

Many businesses and industries found themselves suddenly without leadership. And the stockholders must have wondered why a man that later referred to businessmen as s. o. b.'s found reassurance in their company.

"I want the best men available for the job, and I don't care whether they're Democrats, Republicans or Igorots," stated John Kennedy.⁹ Then the head hunting began.

The "Great Talent Hunt" was an extraordinary spectacle in itself. It was made even more extraordinary because, despite Kennedy's well-known penchant for planning ahead, it did not begin until after the election. Kennedy was sure

⁹"Best Men," Life. V. (May 7, 1960), p. 64.

that there would be plenty of talent available to staff his Administration, but he also knew that if he committed himself ahead of time to political job hunters, he would not have a free hand to pick and choose among the "best men." For this reason he kept clear of any definite commitments until after he had been elected.¹⁰

Kennedy was not, however, naked when he entered the White House. He had amassed an excellent staff. Some of the Kennedy campaign workers were members of his senatorial staff and as such many of them had assured jobs without the necessity of reappointment.

In a larger sense "teams" are dependent upon many more things than the players. Teams must have cheerleaders to sing their phrases, coaches to interpret opposing teams moves and, indeed, the moves of their own members, an audience to play to, fans to cheer it on and opponents to make the game worth the effort. In this sense the Kennedy team was complete.

This chapter will analyze the "team that Jack built." It will look at the biographers of Jack Kennedy in this manner. It seeks to answer several questions:

1. What was the relationship between Jack Kennedy and his team members?

¹⁰Ibid., p. 66.

2. What did they see in him?
3. What need did Jack Kennedy fulfill for them?
4. How was this relationship manifested in their "Kennedy" biographies?

The Palace Guard

Roger Hilsman, Theodore Sorensen, and Evelyn Lincoln were close to John Kennedy. Lincoln and Sorensen were closer than a great many of the staff members because they had known him for over a decade. After the death of J. F. K. they wrote their ideas on Kennedy and his administration.

By her own admission Evelyn Lincoln was devoted to Jack Kennedy and her first book, My Twelve Years with John F. Kennedy, is a story of love. Mrs. Lincoln had a year left in her law school program when she came to work for Congressman Kennedy. She saw him through his first senatorial race and his bid for the Presidency.¹¹ Sorensen describes Mrs. Lincoln as a fellow Nebraskan whose unflinching devotion and good nature more than compensated for a sometimes overly possessive attitude.¹²

¹¹Evelyn Lincoln, My Twelve Years With John F. Kennedy (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1965), p. 8.

¹²Theodore C. Sorensen, Kennedy (New York: Bantam Books Inc., 1965), p. 62.

Evelyn Lincoln's hymnal begins in chronology with her first meeting with J. F. K. when he was a lowly Congressman from Massachusetts. According to her she could immediately determine that he was going to be the nation's president one day.¹³ She describes Kennedy as throughout the book in adjectives of praise. Her insights into Kennedy's personality and those of some of the persons around him are interesting but they reflect limited contact with the members of his cabinet and his appointees. She writes about Kennedy the man and the father and deletes the many other facets of the total.

Of Kennedy the man, Mrs. Lincoln extolls his ability to withstand pain and criticism, sorrow and disappointment, rejection and death. She describes Kennedy as a man that will not take no for an answer or stupidity for policy.¹⁴ He is the constant conqueror ravaging the sins of ignorance and mediocracy. Says Mrs. Lincoln:

On Saturday Herbert Klein, Vice President Nixon's press secretary, had invited us to hear Truman's statement in their office because our set was not working. I had a repairman fix our television, Monday morning so that we could hear the Senator at 4:30. He was calm and confident, and answered Truman directly. He said it was "time for

¹³Lincoln, "Twelve Years." p. 14.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 5.

a new generation of leadership to cope with new problems and new opportunities." Then he demolished Truman's main argument by pointing out that far from being controlled, his votes came largely from the primary victories. He noted that he entered and won all that were open while neither Symington nor Johnson had entered a single primary, although they did support Kennedy's opponents. He ended by saying, "I do not intend to step aside at anyone's request." Now he was ready for the convention.¹⁵

Theodore Sorensen was a twenty-four year old lawyer from Nebraska when he came to work for John Kennedy. The fact that he was a Unitarian from the midwest made no difference to the Catholic from Massachusetts.¹⁶ Sorensen, claims Salinger, hit it off magnificently with the then Senator Kennedy. He had a genius for translating the thoughts and social convictions of Kennedy into an eloquent and persuasive language.¹⁷ Sorensen was in charge of the special taskforce that developed policy positions and speech drafts for J. F. K.

If the statement that Evelyn Lincoln wrote a hymnal is true then it must be insisted that Ted Sorensen wrote the Kennedy Bible. Sorensen claims that he was most impressed about Kennedy by the fact that he seemed so "ordi-

¹⁵Ibid., p. 142.

¹⁶Sorensen, Kennedy. p. 11.

¹⁷Pierre Salinger, With Kennedy. (New York: Avon Books, 1966), 95.

nary" in his demeanor, and that he spoke easily but almost shyly, without the customary verbosity and pomposity.¹⁸

Sorensen seems to be particularly impressed by this fact that there was no attempt to impress him with the firmness of his handshake or the importance of his office with the sound of his voice.

Ted Sorensen makes no apology for his statement that the book is an expression of praise for Jack Kennedy, but he insists that it is not merely out of loyalty and affection, but out of deep pride and conviction. For those persons that have read, "Why England Slept and Profiles in Courage, the writing style and words and phrases will sound familiar. The familiar Kennedy "moreover" and the habit of predicating information on conditions. Sorensen heatedly denied the Kennedy style:

Most regrettable, in my view, are those memorials and tributes which speak more of his style than of his substance. The Kennedy style was special--the grace, the wit, the elegance, the youthful looks will rightly long be remembered. But what mattered most to him, and what in my opinion will matter most to history, was the substance--the strength of his ideas and ideals, his courage and judgment. These were the pith and purpose of his Presidency...¹⁹

¹⁸Sorensen. Kennedy, p. 11.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 8.

Sorensen deals with Kennedy the politician--senator and President. He concentrates on JFK's ability to solve the problems of governmental leadership in what he calls a progressive direction despite the limiting factor of process. Sorensen notes that Kennedy's first executive order, improving surplus food distribution to the needy, had been previously held up by his predecessor for lack of clear statutory authority. Kennedy issued it immediately, drawing upon his constitutional powers and on revenues available from customs fees.²⁰ Sorensen appreciates the fact that within the Executive Branch Kennedy accepted responsibility for every major decision, delegating work but never responsibility to Cabinet, National Security Council Joint Chiefs of Staff, White House aides or other advisers. He did not wait for unanimity among them or permit them to disregard his instructions. In reporting on executive actions to the Congress, he deliberately worded his messages to read "I have directed the Secretary..." rather than "I have requested..."²¹ This approach seems to appeal to Sorensen.

Roger Hilsman, a West Point graduate, and a member of Merrill's Marauder, was assigned to the China-Burma-

²⁰ Ibid., p. 437.

²¹ Ibid., p. 438.

India theatre. From this experience he became an author and later a professor at Columbia University. In 1963 John Kennedy chose him to succeed W. Averell Harriman as Assistant Secretary of State for Far East Affairs. Hilsman claimed that it was incumbent upon the members of the Kennedy staff to write on that phase of the administration with which they were directly connected.

Hilsman and Kennedy had much in common. Both were soldiers and served with important units--Kennedy in the Navy and Hilsman in the Army. Both men were war heroes. Both were outspoken and as a result, to different extents, both suffered for it.

Of Kennedy Hilsman believed his was the most extraordinary personality, of all the makers of foreign policy. He describes him as quick in mind and sophisticated--a man vaguely charming, but who also had a sprightly, earthy, even impish Irish wit.²² Hilsman's book is an excellent work on the men and "machinery" of American foreign policy during his participating years on the Kennedy team. He gives some insight on those figures in the secretariat that have been vastly publicized and in some cases misunderstood.

Roger Hilsman describes his book as the story of

²²Roger Hilsman, To Move a Nation (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1967), 47.

battles over national policy. He explains that given the importance of the stakes involved, it was entirely appropriate that they fought hard and passionately--indeed, it would be cause for dismay if it were otherwise.²³ Clearly we can see that warrior Hilsman recognizes warrior Kennedy and as rough and tumble policy maker he found it difficult to understand Dean Rusk. Hilsman talks of Rusk's tact and attention to protocol, but for a man of action his subtle disapproval of Rusk's performance rings true. As the Gary Cooper type of hero described to a tee, Hilsman explains a segment of the first Kennedy Khrushchev meeting:

It took place on June 3 and 4, and it was harsh. They clashed over every subject that came up. Khrushchev responded with special ferocity when Kennedy referred, as he had done with Gromyko, to the possibility of "miscalculation." Khrushchev, a little later, told him that the decorations on his chest were Lenin Peace Medals, Kennedy could not help remarking, "Well, I hope you keep them."²⁴

Evelyn Lincoln, Ted Sorensen and Roger Hilsman-- the palace guard are keepers of the faith. Their writing defends Kennedy. They stand beside him against the oncoming tank at the Bay of Pigs. They speak their interpretations

²³Ibid., p. 48.

²⁴Ibid., p. 135-136.

of his ideology. They praise him and they idealize their battling president.

The New Frontier Brain Trust

Three scholars wrote on the life of JFK. To a certain degree the scholarly detachment is conspicuously absent. In the case of Arthur M. Schlesinger and James MacGregor Burns, this absence can be particularly explained. Burns was selected the Kennedy family to write on the life of JFK in anticipation of the flood of campaign biographies in the 1960 Presidential Year. It was hoped that the existence of such a biography by such a noted political scientist would stave off the torrent of efforts presented by less perceptive men. Schlesinger, a historian of fame and fortune as a result of his Age of Jackson, was a small part of the Kennedy team. This position was practically unheard of. His office was in the White House and he had access to the president-- a historian's dream. I. E. Levine, however, was a New York author-- a professional writer trained in history but a Ph.d. in public relations. His book Champion of World Peace: Dag Hammarskjold was as unlike the title as one could imagine.²⁵ It was a thorough study

²⁵The physical limitations discussed here are those of the framework of the United Nations and the job of the Secretariat. Hammarskjold found, indeed as U. Thant, that often he was reduced to begging and pleading with little success.

of the man and his job and limitations, both mental and physical. It is now the definitive Hammarskjold biography.

Arthur M. Schlesinger, as Time aptly describes, was more a part of the atmosphere than the substance of the New Frontier.²⁶ His office, symbolically, was tucked away in a remote corner of the East Wing, near the social secretary and the correspondence section. His assignments few and not very specific were typical of his thousand days. He was only on the periphery of power, but that was closer than most historians have ever been.²⁷

Schlesinger claims that the book, "A Thousand Days," is but a memoir. He further states that no one else will ever be able to achieve the central, the presidential, perspective on these years. Even the public official closest to Kennedy, then the Attorney General of the United States, looking at the White House Papers after his brother's death, was astonished at the variety of presidential issues he had not known about before.²⁸

Schlesinger is interested in Kennedy, the idealist.

²⁶"The Combative Chronicler," Time, Vol. 86, no. 35 (December 17, 1965), pp. 51-53.

²⁷Ibid., p. 54.

²⁸Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), IX.

Of Kennedy the man he says:

... he was objective and wryly humorous, candid about himself and impressively dispassionate in his judgement of others.²⁹ He reported Arthur Goldberg as telling him that Humphrey would accept if he were Kennedy's definite choice. Humphrey would add more to the ticket than anyone else, Kennedy said but he thought Hubert had campaigned irresponsibly in West Virginia, even though he had been under provocation.³⁰

I. E. Levine was an outsider. He was not a part of the Kennedy administration. In his dozen books on world figures and their relationships to their nations he has established a reputation as a political biographer. Levine, a graduate of City College of New York, wrote Cromwell, which gained him a Pulitzer Prize.

Levine sees Kennedy as an innovator of ideas and policies within the framework of american government. He claims that Kennedy was a man of action, trying where others had not attempted. Investigating was a part of the drive and curiosity that was a very large part of Levine's Kennedy. Levine wonders why Kennedy allowed Rusk to stay in his cabinet when, in Levine's opinion, Rusk was too careful to seek solutions that might be available out-

²⁹Ibid., pp. 21-22.

³⁰Ibid., p. 31.

side of those diplomatic channels prescribed to the state department.³¹

Of the three scholarly works written on Jack Kennedy, James MacGregor Burns' John Kennedy: A Political Profile, is probably the best. Burns' set, as conditions for the completion of his work, the unrestricted use of the Kennedy papers and staff. This included taped conversations with the Senator, his family and hangers on. The work is a pre-Presidential biography and as such traces the tendencies of "shanty-Irish" politics in Boston to the cooly (removed) two generations machine of JFK. This is Burns at his best. Burns describes the Kennedy family and perhaps gives the best answer to the question, why a Kennedy?"

So by the late 1930's, the Kennedys seemed to have everything--money, looks, education, brains, high standing in society, in their church, and in the nation. They were something new in America--the immigrants' final surpassing of the blue bloods... . They were part of the New Deal upsurge but no longer emotionally kin to it, part of the highest income group but politically separated from it, worshipers in the Catholic Church but not willing... to submerge themselves in her... . This detachment, perhaps explains Joseph Kennedy sending his boys to study in London under Harold Laski, who, as a Jew, a Socialist, an agnostic, dogmatist, was opposites with him.³²

³¹I. E. Levine, Young Man In the White House (New York: Julian Messner, 1966), 105.

³²James MacGregor Burns, John Kennedy: A Political Profile (New York: Harcourt, Brock & World, Inc., 1959), 34.

Burns is one of the Kennedy biographers that saw keenly something that those non-politically oriented men thought to be trees:

On the otherwise rather flat and dreary political terrain, he was the one Democrat, aside from Stevenson, whose political image had been projected into the minds of millions of non-political Americans. ... it was mainly a combination of his youthful, arresting appearance and the capacity of television and picture magazines to project that image into thirty million or more living rooms across the country. ... When pollsters in the summer of 1959 tried to describe, in their own way, what kind of person they thought Kennedy was, voters answered in such terms as "energetic...intelligent...good looking ...strong character...good family...aggressive...dynamic...outspoken."³³

Ted Sorensen claims that Burns was only allowed to do the book because Kennedy was oversensitive to criticism.³⁴ He further states that the Senator was irritated by the fact that Burns mistook his refusal to display emotion as a lack of concern or commitment.³⁵ To add to the Kennedy disapproval he failed to understand why Burns would not emphasize a far greater evolution. Kennedy thought that Burns could have contrasted his indifferent record at

³³Ibid., p. 58.

³⁴Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 5.

³⁵Ibid., p. 14.

school with his present intensity.³⁶

The scholars seem to be interested in the things which interest them most; Schlesinger in ideas; Levine in the political relationship of a man to his job; and Burns in the nature of a political entity.

The Keepers of the Flame

For a brief period of time John Kennedy was a newsman. As a result of this fact and the fact that the news media had done so much for him in his quest for the presidency Kennedy welcomed the press in the first line Presidential press conferences. Says Pierre Salinger:

"JFK would not even have the temporary protections of a transcript check. He would be communicating instantaneously with tens of millions of Americans in their homes--and watchful Communist diplomats in their embassies. He could not go off the record. He could accuse no one of misquoting him."³⁷

As a result of Kennedy's acceptance of the members of the press and the indulgences that he granted single reporters, he became popular with many members of the press. Later on in his administration Kennedy found them to be largely sympathetic. This sympathy was per-

³⁶Ibid., p. 39.

³⁷Salinger, With Kennedy, 82.

haps due in fact to the private bits of information and interviews granted to reporters who made their bread and butter through exclusives. After John Kennedy's death many of these reporters wrote biographies complimentary to him and largely in his praise. This was an important thrust in the creation of the JFK myth.

Bill Adler, Benjamin Bradlee, Alex Goldman and Tom Wicker are newsmen. They are a special segment of the press corps that wrote books on JFK that dealt primarily with the Kennedy wit, grace, style and image. These books represent the crux of the great Sorensen fear of preoccupation with "style rather than substance." They, moreover, indicate a literary parasitism in that they take from the literature and add substantially nothing.

Bill Adler's book, The Kennedy Wit, was designed to draw a portrait of JFK by reviewing the humor that he showed as President.³⁸ In the book, Adler compiles Kennedy quips taken from the 1960 campaign, the Presidency, the family gatherings and from Press conferences. Adler presents no comment on the sayings and sets them in no particular frame of reference. The book in its entirety set up structurally as indicated by the sources presents the

³⁸Bill Adler, The Kennedy Wit. (New York: The Citage Press, 1964), preface.

following examples:

1960 Campaign

"Someone was kind enough, though I don't know whether he meant it kindly, to say the other night that in my campaign in California I sounded like a Truman with a Harvard accent."³⁹

New York City
September 14, 1960

The Presidency

On a trip to the West Coast, President Kennedy was asked by a little boy, "Mr. President, how did you become a war hero?"

It was absolutely involuntary. They sank my boat.⁴⁰

The Family

"I see nothing wrong with giving Robert some legal experience as Attorney General before he goes out to practice law."⁴¹

Press Conferences

President Kennedy was asked to comment on the press treatment of his administration thus far:

"Well, I'm reading more and enjoying it less."⁴²

May 9, 1962

³⁹Ibid., p. 3.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 29.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 64.

⁴²Ibid., p. 77.

These examples are typical of those used in the Adler book.

The entire text of Benjamin Bradlee's book, That Special Grace, appeared in Newsweek. Bradlee claims that historians are prone to stifle laughter in formality.⁴³ It is to this point that his book is addressed. The book describes Kennedy:

John Kennedy was a wonderfully funny man, always gay and cheerful never mean--but historians are prone to stifle laughter in formality. You could see a laugh coming in his eyes before you could hear it from his lips. His humor was often most appealing when he directed it against himself.⁴⁴

Alex Goldman wrote a book similar to that of Bill Adler. In fact almost all of Adler's quotations are presented in Goldman's, The Quotable Kennedy. Goldman describes his book as the stirring and meaningful words of a man who has left an indelible mark on history.⁴⁵ Goldman claims that every Kennedy phrase, seriously thought-through and weighed for truth and effect, carries tremen-

⁴³Benjamin Bradlee, That Special Grace. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1963), preface.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 1-2.

⁴⁵Alex. J. Goldman, Ed. The Quotable Kennedy (New York: Belmont Books, 1967), cover.

dous implications. Each expression breathed its author's idealism and imagination.⁴⁶ Such broad generalizations when fitted to the aforementioned Schlesinger discussion must worry the parents of businessmen everywhere. Goldman quotes Kennedy on clear-sightedness:

"We have comfortably assumed that Marxist dogma and totalitarian repression would produce only stultified minds and ridiculous theories... but tonight we are not laughing at the sputniks."⁴⁷

Tom Wicker was closer to the President than Adler, Bradlee, or Goldman. He was the New York Times White House reporter for the three years of the Kennedy administration. He was born in Hamlet, North Carolina and was a graduate of North Carolina University. Wicker was riding in the Presidential motorcade when Kennedy was killed.

"The human race has ever been plagued by a hunger for heroes, anthropomorphic like the gods," says Wicker, "among whom the ancient Greeks installed them."⁴⁸ He claims that this is the reason that they become legends when they die. Wicker thinks that the superior qualities that made

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 9.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 33.

⁴⁸Tom Wicker, Kennedy Without Tears (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1964), p. 9.

humans heroes become lost in the flood of sentimentality of the legend. For this reason Wicker claims to have written his book. Wicker envisioned Jack Kennedy:

Now, I think that what Kennedy really had of that mentality was a rather peculiar form of the will to win. He wanted power, alright but something more; "This ability," he once said, "to do things well, and to do them with precision and with modesty, attracts us all." It was a theme to which he often returned--the pursuit of excellence. And as the probability of his political canonization turns toward certainty, and the sad classification of his humanity into stone and bronze continues, there is not much football coach in the man Kennedy who recalls himself to me most strongly.⁴⁹

Wicker attempts to place Kennedy in perspective despite his colleagues. But, Wicker's point of view presents interesting places of confusion:

If that human Kennedy still seems to me to have been altogether too detached and too controlled to have been, as were Nixon and Lord Jim, "one of us." With all those fascinating hesitancies and inadequacies and torments out of which literature is made, nevertheless he was a man "of few days and full of trouble; and for all I know he may even have played "such fantastic tricks before high heaven as to make the angels weep." But the statues will tell us nothing of that.⁵⁰

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 23.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 24.

Wicker stresses that he is trying to bring John Kennedy down to a level that we can all appreciate. One must wonder why, then that he uses such mysterious creations to do so.

Other "Keepers of the Flame" take different approaches to their Kennedy memorials. Many of them use their specialty in investigating Kennedy. Hugh Sidey, Urs Schwarz, Bruce Lee and Harry Golden use a historical approach. Helen Fuller and Theodore White use a politically oriented approach.

Harry Golden is the owner-editor of the Carolina Israelite. From this opening statement much can be garnered. He is a Jew that lives and works and pays taxes in the South. He describes his book as a work that every Southern writer has in mind and will come to write.⁵¹ Golden had the aid of Lee C. White, Kennedy's civil rights aide as far as the gathering of data was concerned.

Golden viewed Kennedy as the beginning in the long line of governmental leaders that was a spokesman for toleration. As a Jew in the land of the Klan, Golden and Kennedy had in common a religious barrier that would have to be dealt with in the South. Golden claimed that Kennedy

⁵¹Theodore White, The Making of the President 1960. (New York: Cardinal Books, 1960), 301.

was the first President since Lincoln to declare that racial segregation and discrimination are morally indefensible.⁵² Golden's chronicle of Kennedy attempts to deal with the problem of discrimination in the south runs the gambit of incidents from the rise of Dr. Martin Luther King to the February 63 message to congress on the state of racial tensions in the United States. Golden points up the Kennedy stand on civil rights:

To some extent President Kennedy had signaled his commitment to the cause of Negro civil rights even before he was elected. During the 1960 campaign he telephoned Mrs. Martin Luther King when her husband was given a four-month prison sentence technically for not having a Georgia driver's license.... The Kennedy commitment on behalf of the victimized Dr. King may have been shrewd politics, but the Kennedys had no way of knowing that this momentary intervention by its very nature had become an absolute policy.

Theodore H. White won the coveted Pulitzer Prize for his work, The Making of the President, 1960. White was a summa cum laude graduate of Harvard University in 1938. He has been editor of the New Republic and author of many books. He was editor of the Stilwell Papers.

White saw in Kennedy a talent that he claims was

⁵²Ibid., p. 399.

vastly absent in the Nixon candidacy:

Comparing crowds at Dayton, Ohio, it was noticeable that Kennedy gathered the same number of people that Nixon did even though Kennedy spoke in sunshine and Nixon in drizzle which was probably a vote for Nixon. The difference was in the enthusiasm of the crowds. Kennedy's supporters cheered wildly while the Nixon crowd remained unemotional.⁵³

White seemed impressed by this ability to command attention and enthusiasm. He also saw the Kennedy ability to say the right thing at the appropriate time. He comments:

It simply came down to the question which was more pleasant to hear, from Nixon, "May the time never come when any president be Democrat or Republican apologize for trying to protect the United States from surprise attack," or from Kennedy, "This is a great country. But I think it can be greater. I think we can do better. I think we can make this country move again."⁵⁴

Hugh Sidey, author of John F. Kennedy: President, was a member of the twenty-five reporter White House Press Corps. He had done a number of articles for Time Magazines. Sidey wrote Kennedy's cover story for Time during the 1960 election year. He was with Kennedy in Los Angeles at the Democratic Convention and in Dallas with Kennedy in the last motorcade. Sidey makes no apology for the fact that

⁵³Ibid., p. 401.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 444.

he enjoyed the President's confidence and was granted private interviews. Sidey claims that he views Kennedy as an innovator-- a man unafraid to begin.⁵⁵ Says Sidey:

What will the historians write of John F. Kennedy? Was his term in office too short for him ever to receive the mantle of greatness? Perhaps contemporary historians too often measure a chief executive's achievements by the numbers of bills passed in the Congress, but the enemies he destroyed, or by the appropriations he was granted. But what of the tendency in recent months toward a calmer world? What of the strength of the nation itself, its growing ability to build prosperity and promote the cause of freedom throughout the world. But it is my belief that when he is viewed from that distance which scholars deem appropriate, JFK will be high on the horizon of history.⁵⁶

Helen Fuller was born in Cullman, Alabama, and was educated at the University of Alabama. She went to Washington as a special attorney with the Department of Justice. In 1940 she joined the New Republic to organize the magazine's first Washington bureau. Recently, after serving as managing editor of the magazine for many years, Miss Fuller became contributing editor on matters relating to Congress

⁵⁵Hugh Sidey, John F. Kennedy President (New York: Crest Books, 1963), viii.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 356.

and politics, in order to devote more of her time to writing and lecturing in the South. In her foreword Miss Fuller explains that she is interested in decisions of the President.⁵⁷ She claims that through the early decisions of the Kennedy administration, there can be projected a theory on the effectiveness of the administration in the remaining years.⁵⁸ In reenforcing her idea she says:

John Kennedy's choice of Lyndon Johnson as Vice Presidential running mate was the master stroke that he needed to win the election. Kennedy in one stroke united the factions of the liberal East and the Conservative South with what looked like a combination of both.⁵⁹

Bruce Lee was formerly a reporter with Newsweek Magazine. He is now with the Washington bureau of the Readers Digest. Lee has contributed articles to Boys Life and other similar publications. He was an end on the University of Michigan football team which accounts for his interest in Kennedy the Boy competitor. Lee believes that it was the competitive spirit of JFK that stood him in good stead in his later quest for the Presidency. Lee comments:

⁵⁷Helen Fuller, Year of Trial (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1962), v.

⁵⁸Ibid., v.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 67.

... Joe will win the fight, he almost always does. He is older, heavier, stronger. But Jack is fighting ferociously, pummeling his older brother and being pounded in return. It is not an ordinary fight, for this is not an ordinary family... should the fight resume Jack will fight just as ferociously.⁶⁰

Urs Schwarz is a frequent contributor to the Spectator. He is a German born Jew that escaped the wrath of Adolf Hitler. Schwarz explains that he sees in Kennedy the same strength in which he endowed Franklin D. Roosevelt.⁶¹ Schwarz explains:

John Kennedy envisioned a world where Catholic and Protestant, Mohammed and Jew were equal in their pursuits. This was to be a second "Deal" for the American people and through their influence for the world.⁶²

The members of the press saw Kennedy differently. Some saw laughter others idealism. Some saw toleration and some wisdom in decisions. The truth is that the reporters saw in Kennedy what they hoped to be there. They saw what they needed.

⁶⁰ Bruce Lee, Boys Life of John F. Kennedy (New York: Sterling Publishing Co., Inc., 1964), p. 14.

⁶¹ Urs Schwarz, John F. Kennedy 1917-1963 (London: Paul Hamlin, 1964), p. ix.

⁶² Ibid., p. 17.

Riders of the Presidential Coattail

They are always there and they always will be. Such is human nature. For every Lyndon Johnson there is a barber in central Texas that had a shop in which the President shined shoes. For there is a bit of George Elimpton in us all. Some men reach the top of their profession by hitching their wagons to a rising star. Such was the case of Pierre Salinger and Paul B. Fay.

Paul Fay met John Kennedy in 1942 when, according to Fay, Kennedy tried to get into a touch football game.⁶³ The game was being played at the Naval Motor Torpedo Boat Squadron Training Center at Melville, Rhode Island. Says Fay:

"We had been playing fifteen or twenty minutes when a skinny kid came up and asked us if he could join the game. We agreed with the provision that he got another man to even up the sides. When he returned we hastily chose the other huskier man. ... In the plays that followed I saw nothing but elbows, shoulders and knees, and acquired a collection of bumps and bruises."⁶⁴

This was the first meeting between Jack Kennedy and

⁶³Paul B. Fay, Jr., The Pleasure of His Company (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1964), p. 154.

⁶⁴Ibid., pp. 135-136.

Paul Fay and it was indeed a shock to Fay to find out the very next day that the skinny kid was to be his student in the morning class. Fay appeared later in Kennedy's congressional campaigns as a member of the famous P. T. 109 crew. These appearances became a regular part of the Kennedy campaigns.

Of Kennedy honesty, here, it must be noted that Fay was not a member of the P. T. 109 crew. Fay was interested in the 109 when it was lost, but this was because George "Barney" Ross Fay's friend was abort. Of Kennedy Fay claims:

"I did not know Jack Kennedy well enough to feel the same kind of deep personal loss. I did feel that an unusually intelligent and attractive man with a great deal to live for had been deprived of his chance in life."⁶⁵

Pierre Salinger worked for Adlia Stevenson's election to the presidency for two unsuccessful campaigns. Salinger worked for Robert Kennedy before he came to work for JFK on his brother's recommendation. JFK was then in charge of the investigation of the teamsters under the direction of the Senate Rackets Committee. Salinger came to work as Kennedy's legman and aide in the preparation of dossiers on various men under investigation.

Salinger explains what he saw in JFK:

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 38.

"Looking at it from their viewpoint, the candidate was too young, a Catholic, with only a modest record in the Senate. But looking at it from mine, I had heard a fresh voice in American politics--a voice that cut through much of the political polemics of our time and got down to discussion of the problems of living in an atomic world."⁶⁶

Salinger reflects this theme throughout his book. He was impressed by the ideas that Kennedy poured forth. As a Presidential Press Secretary he steadily improved. Salinger was worried about the live broadcasts of the President to the citizens of the country in that there could be no calling back of words or meanings. He grew to learn that this was as the president wanted it and that Kennedy made few on camera mistakes. Winding up his biography, With Kennedy, he says:

"I am, of course, a prejudiced witness. But I believe that future generations of Americans will rank him as one of our greatest Presidents--not because of his specific accomplishments, and there were many, but because he brought to the world, cynical after almost two decades of cold war, the hope that a better life was possible. Perhaps it was his youth, his eloquence, or his undeniable commitment to life and excellence. But whatever it was, it lit a new hope in the hearts of people everywhere in the world that the force of reason, not the force of arms, might

⁶⁶Salinger, With Kennedy, p. 54.

finally prevail in the councils of man."⁶⁷

The Merceneries of the Macabre

One of the least understood processes in nature is the phenomena of death. It is facinating. People are intrigued by its mystery.

There has been a flood of Kennedy literature in recent years and while all of it has importance to a historian some of the literature raises questions as to its purpose. This literature is of two principal types. There are "picture books" and children's books. Whether these books were written or compiled with the purposes of financial gain, sentimental release or the creation and perpetuation of a legend is open to conjecture. For purposes here it is necessary to determine only what is being sold and to leave the conjecture to the philosophers.

Nancy Bean White is the wife of Theodore H. White, author of, "The Making of the President 1960," Mrs. White makes no secret of her reasons in writing a children's book on the life of John F. Kennedy. Says Mrs. White:

"I was once a judge for a children's book prize in the New York Herald Tribune's contest. I liked the books that I read, and I wondered if I could write one. Since I had met John Kennedy I knew that

⁶⁷Ibid., p.74.

children would want to know all about him so I wrote the book."⁶⁸

Mrs. White saw Kennedy as a brave young man doing a difficult job. She carries this theme out throughout her book.⁶⁹ As with most children's books, it is necessary to repeat the theme several times and Mrs. White does so on pages 4, 14, 27, and 36. She expresses her view of Kennedy:

"Everyone will long remember his young good looks. His ready smile. His quick step. He was a man on the move. A brave man."⁷⁰

Martha and Charles Shapp have written a number of children's books. These books are usually about statesmen. They generally concern an American President that died with his mission as yet unfulfilled as in the case of Lincoln, and Wilson. The Shapps are impressed with Kennedy's bravery. This is their theme. They explain Kennedy's ordeals in getting increases in his allowance from an angry Joseph Kennedy, P. T. 109, the choice to run for the Congress and Senate and finally his choice to run against heavy odds for the Presidency. They describe Kennedy:

⁶⁸Nancy Bean White, Meet John F. Kennedy (New York: Random House, 1965), cover.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 4.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 84.

One of the men was so badly burned that he couldn't swim. Though Jack's back had been hurt during the attack, he swam the three miles pulling the burned man with him. If he had tired, they both may have died. But Jack was brave and saved the badly burned man.

Jacqueline Duheme explains that she was taken in by the Kennedys when she visited the country. She was a poor and friendless girl in a strange land and the Kennedys liked her paintings, (American Primitive). It was from this association that she came to know and love the Kennedys. She explains that her subtitles are written for children and that their simplicity reflects the simplicity of the author. Miss Duheme believed that JFK was, "a fresh vision for the future."⁷¹

Her paintings show Kennedy always in a red, white and blue perspective. He is the strong figure in every painting in which he appears. His eyes are bright, and never starring directly at the viewer. In one of her subtitles she says:

"He was always looking forward never backward. This was the way that he saw the world as something to become."

Jacque Lowe compiled Portrait: The Emergence of John F. Kennedy. In this book of pictures there is a

⁷¹ Jacqueline Duheme, John F. Kennedy: A Book of Paintings (New York: Atheneum, 1967), 4.

theme of the young energetic JFK steadily growing older and wiser looking acquiring first medals from the war, a congressional seat, a wife, a senate seat and finally the Presidency.⁷² Lowe makes no written commentary in the entire book. This book of portraits, however, clearly traces the title and at its end John F. Kennedy emerges.

Joan Meyers is the editor of John Fitzgerald Kennedy: As We Remember Him. This book is a collection of pictures and statements about Kennedy and his rise to power. The pictures were selected to closely follow the documentary. The theme running throughout the documentary is that Kennedy was a man loved by many people for many reasons. The book has varied leaders and persons of different nationalities and races in pictures with the president. He is relating to them in various manners.⁷³ The suggestion is that Kennedy was a man for all peoples and consequently a man for all to remember.

Sander Vanocur edited A Tribute to John F. Kennedy. Vanocur begins by saying that, "This book would not have pleased Kennedy, but he would have read it." The book pro-

⁷²Jacque Lowe, Portrait: The Emergence of John F. Kennedy (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, Inc., 1961), 67.

⁷³Joan Meyers, ed. John Fitzgerald Kennedy: As We Knew Him (New York: Atheneum, 1965), 16.

ceeds on the basis that Kennedy liked to read, and his appetite for reading would have been whetted by the reading of the comments of national leaders and members of the press on him, his administration and his death. The book is a collection of such items. They express sorrow and grief at the loss of America and proceed to eulogize Kennedy.⁷⁴ Vanocur's selection is a cross section of great men of all races and religions and nationalities. The central expression running through the book was that of unfulfillment by these leaders of nations.

The United Press International and the Associated Press both published two almost identical works. They were Four Days and Six Seconds in Dallas respectively. These two books traced the events of the assassination and the aftermath to the burial in Washington. They were chronicles. They varied only in respect to the wording of the broadcasts. This wording would have perhaps been vastly different under different circumstances reflecting the policies of the two agencies. But this was a time when national grief allowed the two to speak the same language.

The use of the eternal flame to symbolize the continuity of American government was the central theme of the wire service chronicles. This continuity was expressed in

⁷⁴Sander Vanocur, ed., A Tribute To John F. Kennedy (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1965), 11.

both books by the presentation of two full page pictures of Lyndon Johnson being sworn in by Sarah Hughes on Air Force One. It was reenforced by a picture of Johnson speaking to the American people shortly after the Washington arrival of the plane.

William Manchester wrote two Kennedy books. They were Portrait of a President, and The Death of a President. The Manchester book deserves a bit of special concentration here because of the controversy that arose before its publication.

Jacqueline Kennedy commissioned Manchester to write The Death of a President, with the understanding that a percentage of the sales would go to the John F. Kennedy library.⁷⁵ Manchester was supposed to have a free hand in the writing and publishing of the book. Then the team of RFK and Jacqueline Kennedy decided to censor the manuscript. Manchester refused since he had been under no obligation to submit it to such a censor. Then the battle began. Kennedy lawyers hauled Manchester into court in an attempt to get a restraining order against the book's release. This action was later dropped but the damage was done and Manchester and the Kennedys went their separate ways.

⁷⁵William Manchester, "William Manchester's Our Story," Look, XXXI, (April 4, 1967), p. 64.

Of Kennedy, the President, Manchester saw a man of sensitivity that was aware and sympathetic to the problems of those less fortunate. Says Manchester:

"He particularly impressed me with his deep understanding and response to the problems of all manner of men."⁷⁶

Gene Schoor wrote Young John Kennedy. This book is a portrait of Kennedy the boy and young man and the rivalry between he and Joe Jr. Schoor, a minor league third baseman and reporter for the New York Times, claims that Joseph Kennedy gave all of his sons the will to win. Schoor likes this will to win. Claims Schoor:

"The will to win was the most important Kennedy trait. All of the boys competed constantly for the favor of Joseph Kennedy and themselves."⁷⁷

All of the books discussed in this section were written after the death of John F. Kennedy, except the Manchester. They are largely studies that reflect segments of the man rather than any specific attempt at achieving a total picture. Many of them are picture books that make their commentary in the arrangement of the photographs.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 78.

⁷⁷Gene Schoor, Young John Kennedy (New York: MacFadden-Bartell Book Company, 1966), 13.

They are limited in scope and content and are perhaps the only way that one could merchandise the macabre. All of them pander to the public taste for the intimate detail, the vicarious participation in and identity with the lives of the great and near great. Most of them attempt to capitalize upon a maudlin, sloppy, national guilt syndrome which had obviously become a publisher's bonanza. But above all, all of them pander to simplistic concepts of national ideals which they believe to be a significant part of the national ethos, but which may in time prove to reflect their own mis-reading of the things the masses of modern America find spiritually significant.

The Disloyal Opposition

Largely for the same reason that Dallas Cowboys football fans come to see the Green Bay Packers people everywhere are interested in their opponents. The opposition of forces either constructive or otherwise present and amplify the necessity for continuing excellence. So too the critics of John Kennedy and his administration for whatever reasons of correction or detraction exist and flourish with the acceptance or rejection of their indite-ments at a hardback price of \$4.96.

Social and political criticism is a national pasttime. And as long as governments are employing an economic system

that in any degree takes from the citizen concern will be present. Citizens tend to regard their tax dollars as an admission ticket to the forum of governmental criticism. Those persons that are particularly rabid sometimes like to reenforce their arguments with a publishing company and a prominent reporter's name. Information and opinion distributed at a price of five dollars is thus well worth the investment.

Victor Lasky is a syndicated National Association of News Analyst columnist and co-author of the best selling book, Seeds of Treason. In his book J. F. K., The Man and the Myth, Lasky claims to have gathered together little-known facts, amply supported by both conservative and liberal political sources to present a picture of John F. Kennedy.⁷⁸ Lasky stresses his theme that Kennedy was too immature and ill prepared to be a good President of the United States.⁷⁹

Says Victor Lasky:

"The fact that Kennedy did not appear to know where he was going--or what he was doing--shocked many of his staunchest supporters. Why this should have surprised some of the nation's keenest newspaper reporters was, in itself, surprising. But it told a great deal about the press

⁷⁸Victor Lasky, J. F. K. The Man and The Myth (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1963), Jacket.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 3.

crops which, in large measure, had helped propel a charming but thoughly unprepared-- young man in to the most important job in the world."

S. J. Frolick wrote Once There Was A President. On the surface this book seems to be a moderate appraisal of Kennedy, his family and his administration. It is more than that.

Frolick claims that Kennedy was not fully prepared to assume the mantle of responsibility.⁸⁰ Kennedy's acceptance of the "full responsibility" for the failure at the Bay of Pigs, claims Frolick clearly demonstrates this lack of maturity in judgement.⁸¹

Says Frolick:

"Had Kennedy disclaimed the responsibility for the Bay of Pigs fiasco, his weakness would not have been so clearly evident. This immaturity of decision making was responsible for the lowest ebb of JFK's⁸² popularity since his administration."

⁸⁰S. J. Frolick, Once There Was a President (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), vii.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 37.

⁸²Ibid., p. 38.

CHAPTER III

A TOUCHING OF HANDS

This chapter seeks to explain the perpetuation of the legend of John Fitzgerald Kennedy. The Kennedy biographers, for whatever reasons of identification or need, marketed an image of what they perceived to be the John Kennedy of their manuscript. These marketed images theoretically attempt to fulfill the requirements of the legend.

The biographers' Kennedys will be different because they saw him from many and varied vantage points. Their orientation to politics, the Democratic Party, Kennedy himself, his ideas, and his image will be expressed in the various attitudes that they take and the discussions that they present. The Chapter will explore these orientations and attempt to interpret them. It will serve to explain the correlation between distance to the President and perception of the President, the man, the intellectual, the politician and the symbol of tomorrow.

Chapter two introduced categories into which the authors were placed based on their position in relationship to the "team" that all modern day Presidents have. In the framework of these categories, the investigation

of these opinions of John Kennedy will be carried out. It is to be hoped that through the careful study of these interpretations some light may be shed on the basis for the Kennedy charisma.

Arthur Krock claims that whenever men die with their work undone they become heroes.⁸³ When this death is shocking or untimely and captures the indignation of the people the heroes become legends. Unquestionably, John Kennedy has already become a legend. Tom Wicker claims that Kennedy Airport, Cape Kennedy and the various Kennedy High Schools would have embarrassed and surprised the President. Wicker believes that John Kennedy would have had no conception of the deification that is now going on. News pictures have shown Kennedy and Christ tacked on walls with candles burned beneath the two portraits. Wicker thinks that this would have enraged the President.

Pierre Salinger explained the shock of the assassination and its impact very well when he asked the question, "How many of you shortly after the assassination spoke of President Kennedy when you meant President Johnson."⁸⁴ The sale of Kennedy literature sky-rocketed. For thirteen weeks, almost two years after the assassination, three

⁸³Krock in Kennedy Without Tears, preface.

⁸⁴Salinger. With Kennedy, p. 406.

Kennedy Books were in the top ten on the bestseller list.

The President

The members of the "Palace Guard" saw the president on a personal basis. They were closer to him than any other group with the exception of the President's family and they were in a better position than anyone in the family, with the possible exception of Robert Kennedy, to evaluate his presidential posture than any other segment of authors.

The jobs of the three members of the "Guard" enabled them to see his effectiveness in a different light. This different light led to these selected descriptions of him in the Presidential role in which they knew him best. Of Kennedy Roger Hilsman says:

Kennedy was the leader, not the judge at the State Department. He stimulated new ideas and programs and was not there to referee arguments and harmonize interests. He worked mainly with McNamara, relying on McNamara himself and on Bundy and the White House staff to⁸⁵ keep open his own options for choice.

Hilsman was Kennedy's Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs and in this position he was in the State Department. He clearly is interested in Kennedy's

⁸⁵Hilsman. To Move a Nation, p. 60.

ideas. He sees Kennedy as an innovator of new ideas.

Ted Sorensen explains:

President Kennedy tremendously increased and improved his own impact on the Executive Branch by the use of his personal staff. He knew that it was humanly impossible for him to know all that he would like to know, see everyone that deserved to be seen, read all that he ought to read, write every message that carried his name and take part in all meetings affecting his plans.⁸⁶

Theodore Sorensen was Kennedy's chief speechwriter and a valued council on domestic problems. He was called by those close to the President, Kennedy's alter ego. Sorensen is interested in projecting a Kennedy that improved the office of the Presidency by the effective delegation of power.

Evelyn Lincoln's book is protective. She projects a Kennedy that would not knowingly do wrong. Her President would never discriminate. Says Mrs. Lincoln:

On Sunday morning after the President returned from Mass, he was steamed up about an article that had appeared in that day's London Telegraph. He called for Pierre Salinger immediately to ask him about the article's implication that the press arrangements for his trip to Germany had been made to the advantage of White House correspondents and the disadvantage of

⁸⁶Sorensen. Kennedy. p. 69.

European correspondents. The President would never have made such arrangements.⁸⁷

The composite picture of the Palace Guard then is one of Kennedy--the great innovator that improves government without discrimination.

The New Frontier Brain Trust consists of Arthur Schlesinger, James MacGregor Burns and I. E. Levine. Burns does not comment on Kennedy the President because he wrote a pre-presidential biography. Schlesinger's comments on Kennedy evade the direct question what kind of President was he. This may occur because Schlesinger seems more pre-occupied with Kennedy as an intellectual force in world politics and policy. This too may account for inability to deal with the substance of Kennedy rather than the rather comprehensive intellectual commentary that he gives. Of President Kennedy I. E. Levine says:

The President decided not to wait any longer. He ordered federal troops into Oxford. By five thirty in the morning, when he wearily decided to go to bed, the rioters had been dispersed and Meridith had been enrolled. The President regretted the loss of life and the damage to university property, but he knew that he had done what had to be done. If American democracy was to have any meaning at all, the United States government must be prepared to use the full extent of its power--

⁸⁷Lincoln. My Twelve Years With J. F. K., p. 230.

even fixed bayonets, if necessary--to guarantee that a Negro would have the same rights as any other citizen.⁸⁸

This comment by Levine on the Oxford, Mississippi confrontation signaled the beginning of enforcement of the Kennedy promises on civil rights. Levine sees Kennedy as an upholder of right in this instance. His tone indicates that this may not have been his own personal course of action had he been in a similar situation and this makes the Kennedy intervention serve as a more powerful act of the President.

The "Keepers of the Flame" the newsmen saw the President from the standpoint of their jobs. He was news and that was their business. Many of them, however, were granted personal interviews and as a result came to form an attachment for him. Says Tom Wicker:

"Kennedy has been compared to Franklin Roosevelt and he liked to pose in front of an F.D.R. portrait. In fact some of his qualities more nearly recall Theodore Roosevelt, the apostle of the big stick, the strenuous life and the bulgy pulpit... . Like T. R., too, Kennedy fancied himself a national taste maker."⁸⁹

Wicker felt that too much was being made of Kennedy after his death and that Kennedy himself would have rejected

⁸⁸Levine. Young Man in the White House, p. 171.

⁸⁹Wicker. Kennedy Without Tears, pp. 42-43.

the attempt. Wicker therefore attempted his "tearless" Kennedy work. It was in this light that his comments must be taken.

Of the President Helen Fuller says:

"As he settled down to a routine of dealing swiftly with an unending stream of matters, Mr. Kennedy's personal style underwent a few visible changes. By autumn, White House correspondents observed the President was more reflective and less hurry, and was much less likely to be seen bouncing in and out of the offices of his aides."⁹⁰

Miss Fuller saw a John Kennedy maturing in office. He became in effect more efficient. He was more self reliant and much better organized than earlier. Miss Fuller seems to believe that that is a vital part of adjusting to the Presidency.

"Kennedy adjusted to the task," writes Hugh Sidey. Sidey seems to feel that sometimes the President of the United States seems lost in the vastness of his job. And, the trappings of the position--the huge airplanes, the big cars, the army staff--seem to overwhelm a single man.⁹¹

Bruce Lee seems to feel that Kennedy grew into the job.⁹² He sees Kennedy almost frightened at first then tempered by the Cuban missile crisis emerging into a tough,

⁹⁰Fuller. Year of Trial, p. 38.

⁹¹Sidey. John F. Kennedy, President, p. 195.

⁹²Lee. Boys Life of John F. Kennedy, p. 179.

hardline spokesman of American foreign policy.

Many of the newsmen did not write directly on the subject of Kennedy as a president at all. Harry Golden was more interested in the man, Pierre Salinger in the buddy; Adler, Bradlee and Goldman in the intellectual, and Urs Schwarz in the idealist. Theodore White wrote on the candidate.

The composite of the "Keepers of the Flame" seems to indicate that the press was interested in the transition. This seems logical in that the transition was made for them as well as for the President. They had to, themselves, get used to the live television news conferences, midnight news conferences, and the President himself. Even Wicker's claim that Kennedy came to think of himself as a national taste maker indicates a certain self-assurance.

The "Riders of the Presidential Coattail" present a curious picture of Kennedy. They were blind to him as a President. They seem to consider their relationships to him too close for the fact that he was President to enter the question. Their books are filled with "Mr. President," "I told Jack," or "Jack told me." Perhaps the question should be raised here whether they realized that he was President.

Salinger's book seems to be a justification for his California Senate race. He mentions this several times in

his text. He seems to be explaining the fact that he was qualified to go to Capitol Hill on his own merits. JFK in this seems to be a lever. He is real to Salinger as a man and an intellectual and, perhaps a symbol for tomorrow, but for very little else.

Paul Fay's Kennedy is a buddy. He is "Shafty." Old war buddy. Fay is along for the ride strictly. He passes on Kennedy the President.

This collective attitude in the two Presidential coattail riders is believable in that they were interested in bettering their positions and very little else. They have no words for Kennedy as a President. He is a tool to be skillfully manipulated.

The "Merchants of the Macabre" did see Kennedy as a President. Indeed, they may have seen him too well. Says Nancy Bean White:

"Kennedy was not able to make all the changes he wanted to make. He learned a whole country cannot move as fast as one man. Big changes take time. Kennedy hoped the country would give him this time."⁹³

Jacqueline Duhême thought that Kennedy started the country moving again. She felt that he had brought to the White House the energy that had been so long absent. He had got the country wanting to become the leader of the

⁹³White. Meet John F. Kennedy., p. 83.

world.⁹⁴

The appropriately named Sapps wrote that Kennedy set out bravely to change the country. He wanted it to be a better place. Kennedy as presented by the Sapps took the Bay of Pigs and emerged from the mistake a better man-- a man now unafraid.⁹⁵

Joan Meyers saw Kennedy as the nation's P. T. 109 skipper. He became for her a reincarnated hero. He was a dragon-killing President. He backed down Castro and Kruschev in Cuba. To her this was the beginning of the "brave new President."⁹⁶

The "merchants" saw Kennedy as a man on the move. They perceived the President as a hero. To be sure he had difficulty, but, then one cannot be a hero without opposition.

The opposition viewed Kennedy exactly as one would expect them to. They disliked him. Says Victor Lasky:

The President, in short, has talked too much. He thereby cheapens what he says, and casts doubt as to his credibility. In rhetoric of an ultimatum, he demanded a cease-fire in Laos. But he failed to back up his strong words uttered at a

⁹⁴Duhême. John F. Kennedy, A Book of Paintings, p. 12.

⁹⁵Martha & Charles Sapp. People Look at Kennedy, p. 86

⁹⁶Meyers. John F. Kennedy as We Remember Him, p. 73.

televised press conference on
March 23, 1961.⁹⁷

Frolick does not care to comment on the Kennedy Presidency. He does feel that the President was not on top of things as he should have been. Frolick cannot explain why Kennedy was in Latin America when he knew that Oxford, Mississippi was about to undergo intergration.⁹⁸

The biographers, then, saw JFK the President as a leader and innovator. He was a man that adjusted to his job quickly. He was a trend maker and an organizer. They viewed him as competent. The opponents, however saw him as argumentative, indecisive, and unavailable for comment.

Kennedy the Man

In discussing Kennedy the man the staffers saw him as a man with relatively simple tastes. To be sure his clothes were expensive, and so were his houses. They were not luxuriously furnished and he had a few ^{but} Botany 500 suits.

Evelyn Lincoln recalls Kennedy's personal love for speed. She claims that he would often, on trips to the airport, take the wheel. He would race through the streets

⁹⁷Lasky. J. F. K., the Man & the Myth, p. 568.

⁹⁸Frolick. Once There was A President, p. 37.

barely missing red lights. Cops would whistle, cars would honk, but he ignored everything other than his objective.⁹⁹

Sorensen claims that the President's disarming way of being very ordinary in his demeanor was genuine. The President was to Sorensen a man that had a very good judgement on what was fitting and appropriate for every kind of occasion. As Sorensen says, "He never puts on an act."¹⁰⁰

Hilsman saw Kennedy's love for his family as the characteristic that he saw so clearly. He was proud of his wife. When a dignitary came to visit him, Kennedy, upon seeing his wife on the lawn dressed only in a sweater, skirt and loafers invited her over to meet the dignitary loafers and all.¹⁰¹

The "Guard's" Kennedy displays all of the human qualities of compassion, ordinary demeanor and a fault--speeding. Their conception of the man is unusual. They were close to him and revered him, yet they saw in him an ordinary man.

Two of the intellectuals missed the man completely. Burns, who wrote a pre-presidential campaign biography was interested more in the politician and intellectual.

⁹⁹Lincoln. "Twelve Years." p. 243.

¹⁰⁰Sorensen. Kennedy, p. 13.

¹⁰¹Hilsman. "Nation," p. 48.

Schelesinger has difficulty seeing, again, substance. He is interested more in the idea.

Levine sees Kennedy as a man of bravery. He alludes to the "hero" Kennedy and his decision to swim out three miles with a ailing back in an attempt to facilitate a rescue for his men. This act was to Levine a trait in the man.¹⁰² He was brave and this bravery was to Levine carried into the White House.

The Press' Man was one that could not tolerate bigotry, indecision or stupidity. He was a man with whom one could find understanding on some grounds. He was a man that loved competition and welcomed the challenge. He was a man of action. Yet he had a streak of Walter Mitty in him.

Helen Fuller claims that Kennedy forbade segregation at any function. When Charleston, South Carolina refused to serve to a nonsegregated meeting of the Civil War Centennial Commission, he directed that the meeting be held elsewhere. He would never serve at a gathering where Americans were not treated equally.¹⁰³

Hugh Sidey said that Kennedy never met people with whom he could not establish some kind of understanding.

¹⁰²Levine. Young Man, p. 67.

¹⁰³Fuller. Year of Trial, p. 125.

Kennedy was able to do this because he reasoned with people. He would listen and this was something that most people were unused to from a man in his position.¹⁰⁴

Benjamin Bradlee claims that Kennedy had a streak of Walter Mitty in him. When he was losing, he was the old warrior at the end of a brilliant career, asking only that his faithful caddy point him in the right direction and let instinct take over.¹⁰⁵

Bruce Lee reported that the personal touch in politics was repulsive to Kennedy the man. He hated handshaking, backslapping and baby kissing. He didn't like to make promises and then break them. Lee believes that this was because Kennedy did not feel at home with strangers.¹⁰⁶

The Press has Kennedy appearing as a man with firm convictions, understanding, and honesty. The Bradlee sidelight into Kennedy's Walter Mitty syndrome is interesting. The Lee handshaking fetish is more interesting in that it indicated an attitude of a man above politicking in the traditional manner.

The "Riders" discuss Kennedy as a strong man that was insistant on ridding himself of the shadow of his father's

¹⁰⁴Sidey, J. F. K. President, p. 58.

¹⁰⁵Bradlee. That Special Grace, preface.

¹⁰⁶Lee. "Boys Life." p. 114.

name.

Salinger says:

"Such things as long motorcades during the campaign and after he was president were most painful to him. The smiling candidate or smiling President would arrive in his hotel room, shake off his support and ease into a warm bath with a sigh of relief--the closest he ever came to complaining about his ailment."¹⁰⁷

Paul Fay explains that when Hugh Sidey came to interview Kennedy for the cover story in Time, the question of his father's influence came up. When Fay responded favorably to the aid of the father image, Kennedy became upset. Kennedy later explained that he was trying to run on his merits and his merits alone.¹⁰⁸

The "Merchants" liked to view Kennedy as an angry man. They repeatedly discussed the frequency and voracity of his anger.

William Manchester describes an incident involving the President's temper when General Godfrey McHugh who was responsible for the Texas weather report missed his cue.

Says Manchester:

Kennedy's blood was up. He dialed McHugh's

¹⁰⁷Salinger. With Kennedy, p. 66.

¹⁰⁸Fay. The Pleasure of His Company, pp. 33-34.

extension, chewed him out, and summoned O'Donnell. "Damn it, Kenny, let's check with the local airports from now on," He stormed "or let Mrs. Lincoln do it. The whole Air Force mounts a high-level mission against a not-so-very difficult target and misses it completely, and then my secretary gets on the horn and scores a bulls-eye... He swore again. "Hot. Hot. Jackie's Clothes are all packed and they are the wrong clothes." Another oath. He rose, rathful.¹⁰⁹

Joan Meyers believed that Kennedy was very concerned over the fact that his children would not lead a normal life in the White House. It was for these reasons that he frequently sent them to the family compound to play with their cousins. Kennedy wanted them to take their own hard knocks.¹¹⁰

Jacqueline Duheme shares the same opinion on Kennedy the father. Miss Duheme observed, "Children of all kinds-- his son, his daughter, his nieces, his nephews and their friends swarmed about the President, and he loved it. He organized relay races and swimming competitions for them and took them for rides on electric golf carts to get candy at the nearby country store."¹¹¹

The "merchants" look at Kennedy, the father, and Kennedy, the man that could be angered.

¹⁰⁹Manchester. Death of a President. p. 29.

¹¹⁰Meyers. JFK as we Remember Him, p. 43.

¹¹¹Duheme. J. F. K. Book of Portraits, p. 4.

The opponents see Kennedy the man in the same light. He appears to them as a "Daddy's boy" that succeeded only because Joe Kennedy footed the bill.¹¹² They saw Joseph Kennedy as a frustrated Presidential successor to FDR. In turn the revenge of the father takes place in the son. For Lasky Kennedy is but a pawn for the will of Joe Kennedy.

Kennedy the man emerges as a proud man and father. He is a loving husband. Under pressure he exhibits bravery. He has a trace of Walter Mitty yet a taste for the ordinary. Though Kennedy refused to discuss the role of his father in his political career it must be assumed that it was significant.

Kennedy the Politician

John F. Kennedy was almost always acutely interested in politics. Joseph Kennedy fostered this in his children by prompting political discussions at the dinner table. As a result the Kennedys were able to discuss politics with a man that was at one time halted by Franklin Roosevelt because Roosevelt had heard murmurings about the possible choice of Joe Kennedy as a presidential candidate.

The Palace Guard viewed the politician, Kennedy, according to their various conceptions of what an adept

¹¹²Lasky. "Man & Myth." p. 86.

politician was. Evelyn Lincoln thought that Kennedy was a good politician because he kept abreast of the days events. She, unlike others, thought his reading ability was cultivated for the purpose of political necessity. A good President she felt the pulse of his public as reflected in the printed media.¹¹³

Sorensen thought that Kennedy the politician was at his best when he was campaigning. "Kennedy," says Sorensen, "was his own best campaigner, seeing state leader and visiting state caucuses." In speaking on Kennedy's Vice Presidential attempt Sorensen seems to feel that it was Kennedy's combative spirit that allowed him to usually come away with a victory.¹¹⁴

Levine tells how Kennedy played the game of politics in his race for the Senate:

"In his choice of campaign issues, Kennedy followed the pattern of his earlier congressional campaigns. In a local race he talked of local politics and played down international problems. Whenever bitter rangling broke out he would quietly avoid the issue."¹¹⁵

Schlesinger claims that Kennedy was optimistic. He evaluated his problems before jumping into them. He added

¹¹³Lincoln. Twelve Years, p. 243.

¹¹⁴Sorensen. Kennedy, p. 98.

¹¹⁵Levine. Young Man, p. 98.

up political situations well and responded according to what he thought was the maximum that he could get out of any given situation.¹¹⁶

James Burns pointed out that Kennedy had political courage. Burns felt that Kennedy was often accused of Moderation when, in fact he was trying to get the best legislation that he could under unfavorable circumstances. To prove this he mentioned the O'Mahoney amendment to the Civil Rights Bill. The amendment called for trial by jury of those accused of voting rights violations. The problem was getting convictions out of Southern juries. Kennedy voted for the amendment knowing that with the public eye on the South intensified, the problem of getting convictions would be lessened. He was however against the amendment.¹¹⁷

The intellectuals seem to feel that Kennedy operated under the theory of the politics of the possible. He tried to get the maximum. He was, in short, a political realist that played practical politics.

The newsmen saw Kennedy the politician much in the same light. They recognized that Kennedy played the game well. He was gifted with the tools of the trade. They

¹¹⁶Schlesinger. A Thousand Days, p. 17.

¹¹⁷Burns. "J.F.K., A Political Profile," p. 233.

seemed interested in these tools. Says Theodore White:

Kennedy had the facility to turn an opponents statement into a weapon against him. He could use words to their best advantage. The Nixon slur that Kennedy was a barefaced liar turned out to be a Kennedy tool. Kennedy alluded to the debates and Nixon's use of make-up. Said Kennedy, "I would not accuse Mr. Nixon of being barefaced--but next Tuesday the American people will determine who's telling the truth."¹¹⁸

Tom Wicker believes that Kennedy had the ability to stir up an audience with rhetoric. At the Los Angeles Palladium, Kennedy gave a speech that was so stirring that Wicker stopped the Times' press. When the transcription came through there was nothing in the speech that had not been already been said by the President.¹¹⁹

Kennedy, to Wicker, was not always a good politician. When he tried to pass the Department of Housing using Robert C. Weaver as a lever his plan backfired. According to Wicker when he asked the President about the incident, Kennedy replied, "I played it too cute." It was so obvious that it made them mad.

Helen Fuller believes that Kennedy's laurels came to him as a decision making politician. Again, preoccupied

¹¹⁸White. The Making of the President, 1960, p. 291.

¹¹⁹Wicker. Kennedy Without Tears, p. 54.

with the South and Lyndon Johnson, she stresses the political shrewdness of choosing Johnson as a runningmate thereby giving Kennedy the majority in the South and the election.¹²⁰

The mercenaries did not see Kennedy the politician well. They were more interested in their great president. They were more interested in their symbol for tomorrow.

Nancy Bean White feels that Kennedy studied to get the facts on issues straight. When he was ready she claimed that he made strong speeches. Though some of them made some of the Senators angry, the Kennedy wit soothed the anger and usually won the point.¹²¹

The opponents had plenty to say about the politician. Lasky repeats the Wicker story about the Robert Weaver deal. He sees Kennedy as overly aggressive and belligerent. Kennedy was uncompromising in his dealings with the House and the Senate. As a result claims Lasky, he lost whatever bills he tried to get them to approve.¹²²

Frolick believes that Kennedy was impotent in persuading Congress to pass his legislation. This was because Kennedy had not realized what the transition that occurred

¹²⁰ Fuller. Year of Trial, p. 8.

¹²¹ White. Meet John F. Kennedy, p. 47.

¹²² Lasky. J. F. K. The Man & the Myth, p. 411.

after the death of Sam Rayburn. This failure to comprehend the importance of Rayburn's loss was Kennedy's downfall. Kennedy alienated the Congress because he challenged its traditions and sought to change them.¹²³

The opponents, then, see Kennedy as too aggressive and without the knowledge to know how to go about passing the legislation that he wanted passed.

The biographers generally see Kennedy the politician as adept scholarly in his approaches to the various problems and willing to bargain for his advantage in legislation. Kennedy's personality was a tool that he wielded to good political advantage. His political courage gained him the reputation for being tough.

Kennedy the Intellectual

The guard saw Kennedy the intellectual as a man perceptive in judgement and candor.

Hilsman claims that part of Kennedy's intellectual ability came from his evaluation of the "politics of the possible." "He had the capacity," writes Hilsman, "to see the complications in a world whose inconsistencies surpassed comprehension, yet he had the strong convictions on

¹²³Frolick. Once There Was A President, p. 146.

where we ought to be trying to move." This ability couple the possible with the reality was tempered by Kennedy's understanding of the need to provide his opponents a way out if the trouble became bad.¹²⁴

Sorensen believed that the President had mental processes so direct and clear-cut that they were astounding. This also included his ability to be uncomplicated. "He was at that time," says Sorensen commenting on Massachusetts politics, considered with some disdain to be an intellectual by most Massachusetts politicians and considered with equal disdain to be a politician by most Massachusetts intellectuals." Sorensen claims that the mind of Kennedy was at its best when used to interpret ideas and their practical uses.¹²⁵

The intellectuals, themselves, have much to say on the subject of Kennedy's intellectual ability. Says Schlesinger:

But it was not a case of tout comprendre, tout pardonner. Though he saw the human struggle, not as a moralist, but as an historian, even as an ironist, irony was never permitted to sever the nerve of action. His mind was forever critical but his thinking always retained the cutting edge of decision. When he was

¹²⁴Hilsman. To Move a Nation, p. 48.

¹²⁵Sorensen. Kennedy, p. 296.

told something, he wanted to know what he could do about it. He was pragmatic in the sense that he tested the meaning of a proposition by its consequences; he was also pragmatic in the sense of being free from metaphysics. In his response, too, to the notion of a pluralist universe, Kennedy was a pragmatist--if one may make sensible use of this word, which came into political vogue in the first years of the Kennedy administration with the implication that the Kennedy years had not, after all, been pragmatic but were somehow ideological. They were not ideological, though they could perhaps be termed intellectual.¹²⁶

Levine describes the intellectual energy of Kennedy by pointing out his erratic work habits. Levine claims that Kennedy could read and dictate at the same time while pacing the floor. He could enter into a discussion with an aide and be interrupted by the phone or a dignitary and upon the completion of the conversation turn back to the original discussion summarizing the conversation then going on with his comments.¹²⁷

Kennedy, the intellectuals intellectual, could theorize and had the remarkable capacity to perform several intellectual functions at the same time. To them this was remarkable. He had the ability to be uncomplicated yet deep.

¹²⁶Schlesinger. A Thousand Days, p. 153.

¹²⁷Levine. Young Man in the White House, p. 153.

The newsmen were equally impressed at Kennedy's intellectual ability. Alex Goldman claimed that Kennedy would seriously think through every phrase and weigh it for truth and effect. In this manner he believed that every expression of Kennedy carried this idealism and imagination. Almost in reverence he says, "Each word reveals the studious mind."¹²⁸

Tom Wicker relates an antidote about the cup that he gave McHugh. On the cup (really a beer mug) was written:

"There are three things which are
real: God, Human folly and laughter.
The first two are beyond our comprehension
So we must do what we can with the third.

No one else at the White House, then or a year later knew the source of those lines was Aubrey Mennen's version of The Ramoyana. Wicker claimed that he could find the words in no book of quotations. The Library of Congress could not help him. "But," says Wicker, "Ted Clifton, Kennedy's Military aide, recalls him writing down those words one spring morning, quickly and without reference to any book."¹²⁹

Of Kennedy's intellect, Helen Fuller said, "Kennedy appreciated the intellectual dilemma of voicing a thought that was unpopular." She believed that Kennedy's intellec-

¹²⁸Goldman, The Quotable Kennedy, preface.

¹²⁹Wicker. Kennedy Without Tears, p. 49. out

tual challenge lay in the question of whether a free society can survive if it seeks only its own self interest.¹³⁰

The newspapermen seem to consider Kennedy an intellectual only through the performance of mental gymnastics. Quick recall is not necessarily the mark of an intellectual. The observation of Miss Fuller seems more in line with those of the intellectuals themselves. Kennedy seemingly had an unusually quick mind.

The mercenaries deal with the Kennedy mind as one might expect. They plead simply that he was "smart."

Jacqueline Duhème believes that Kennedy had a remarkable mind in that he could, "command a fresh vision for the future."¹³¹ The mercenaries conclude that Kennedy's ability to read the newspaper constituted intellect. Had they coupled it with his digestion and assimilation of the contents into a working knowledge of his public this theory would have been acceptable. This is, again, the gymnastic. The preoccupation of Kennedy in the debates and his quick recall of information in the face of the debate tempered Dick Nixon. This does not necessarily indicate intellectuality.

The opponents see Kennedy's intellect as a clever

¹³⁰ Fuller. Year of Trial, p. 270.

¹³¹ Duhème. "J. F. K. Paintings," p. 7.

tool used to gain power. They see his recall. There is little attempt made to see beneath the facade of recall. They do not try to select ideas and break them down into foolishness. On this point they quietly concede the victory and attack on the grounds of Kennedy's ineptitude.

Victor Lasky, Kennedy's harshest critic discounts Kennedy's ability to perceive the foreign situation. The fact that it was by general agreement, one of Kennedy's strong points in his term of office is discounted. The Lasky argument is that if the brains were there they were not being used.

The biographers agree that Kennedy was an intellectual. Their points of conflict seem to come on the question of what it means to be an intellectual. The intellectuals seem to vindicate this point. The non-intellectual members of the biography team are appreciative only of the ability to look smart.

Symbol of Tomorrow

Fulfilling this requirement to the satisfaction of this chapter proves to be difficult. The requirement itself if clear is that to be a legend one must be a symbol of the future. The comment itself is said by few of the biographers in a way that can be documented. There is the overwhelming inference, however, found in the evaluation

of the books themselves in reference to their total qualities.

The Palace Guard is most guilty on this point. They have set this point as the unsaid theme of their works. Only Theodore Sorensen says it. Even his statement is garbeled:

"The breathing spell had become a pause, the pause was becoming a detente and no one could foresee what further changes lay ahead. With the gradual rise in the living standard, education and outside contacts of the Russian people--with the gradual economic and political erosion of the barriers which kept Eastern Europe dependent on the Soviets and separated from the West--no European accommodation looked impossible in the long run. Kennedy's stand in the Cuban missile crisis said a European political leader in my office, may well be like the Greek stand against the Persians at Salamis in 400 B. C.--not only a great turning point in history, but the start of a true Golden Age."¹³²

For the intellectuals only Schlesinger speaks to the question by claiming that he believes that Kennedy would have won the next election with ease. Schlesinger believed that Kennedy saw the next administration, like Theodore Roosevelt's as the time for great legislative action, when the seeds planted in the first would come to fruition.¹³³

¹³²Sorensen. Kennedy, p. 839-840.

¹³³Schlesinger. A Thousand Days, p. 1016.

Tom Wicker, for an author writing a supposedly tearless study, fails miserably when he shows his idealism and emotion:

"He knew he had broken through the traditional wall of diplomatic niceties, spoken above the heads of politicians and governments and he believed a new generation of Europeans had responded."¹³⁴

Helen Fuller after one brief year proclaimed to the American people:

"After a year of trial and error, Kennedy was at home with the American people. He himself was confident of what we must do and where we must go, and the country and our allies were confident of his leadership as they had not been since his election."¹³⁵

The riders of the coattail agree. They have too. It enhances the possibility of a better job later. Salinger says that Kennedy would have undoubtedly been elected in the upcoming election. He claims that privately Kennedy agreed. "This election would," claims Salinger, "solidify the growing promise of the New Frontier."¹³⁶

Says Fay, "Jack was hoping that the mandate that he did not receive in 1960 would come in 1964. If it had come

¹³⁴Wicker. Kennedy Without Tears, p. 57.

¹³⁵Fuller. Year of Trial, p. 307.

¹³⁶Salinger. With Kennedy, preface.

to pass the hard won gains that he was so proud of would have solidified.¹³⁷

The merchants were very large on Kennedy as a symbol of things to come. Here, again, this idea came over through tone. In the children's books, the pictures of the smiling, happy, and pensive JFK relate him as a man. The pictures of him standing as though he had the weight of the world on his shoulders indicate his importance--his concern. The pictures of the tear-streaked faces the majestic salute of his tiny son and the riderless horse represent his tragic loss. We see also in the children's books the overpresent Eternal Flame representing his continuance. Five of the books had the exact same pictures described above.

Jacqueline Duhème's American primitive painting of Kennedy spirit deserves special attention. The portrait shows the ascending spirit of Kennedy rising on the wings of two eagles and a dove. The dove has "peace" written on its side and the eagle has "liberty" written on his side.¹³⁸

Nancy White in the language of simplicity taken from her book, Meet John F. Kennedy, says, "He looked for

¹³⁷Fay. The Pleasure of His Company, p. 213.

¹³⁸Duhème. J. F. K. A Book of Paintings, cover.

the paths to move ahead. Then he stepped out in front of his country and its people. He said follow me to the end of the road. And we will seek greatness."¹³⁹ Mrs. White adds, almost as an afterthought, "He was struck down long before we could see what lay at the end of his road. But for a moment we caught his step. And when he turned, we smiled."¹⁴⁰

The opponents leave this point hanging. Both of their books were published while JFK was living. To date no anti-Kennedy work of serious merit has found its way to the shelves. Perhaps this is because it is still too soon.

Kennedy was killed before the proposals and projects that he had outlined had been completed. There was created a vacuum left by the speed of Kennedy's departure. From the biographers it has been determined that Kennedy was viewed, for the most part as a leader and innovator that adjusted to his job quickly. He was a trend maker and organizer. Above all he was competent. This seemed to be the concensus of Kennedy the President.

Kennedy the man was young, a husband, a father, and a believable human being. He is believable because, like most mortals, he dreams too. He can be identified with

¹³⁹White. Meet John F. Kennedy, p. 85.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., p. 85.

because he shies away from the luxurious and prefers the ordinary. He emerges as a man--a man of human frailty--bad back--lost children--a human being.

Kennedy the politician is adept, scholarly and realistic in his acceptance of the possible. His personality geared to the political life, becomes a vital tool in his popularity. His firmness becomes a feared question in the minds of his enemies. His stature is growing not only in the United States but throughout the world and most especially in Eastern Europe where hope is a scarce commodity.

Kennedy the intellectual is a man of quick recall and rapidfire answers. He had the ability to solve and project difficult problems and explain their solutions on terms of simplicity. He had the ability to perceive questions of difficult implication and interject them into his policy.

Kennedy the symbol for tomorrow was a representative of a promise as yet unfulfilled. He was young. He was smart. He was brave. He meant something to the people--something of which they were deprived.

The legend's requirements are thus fulfilled. For a few years Americans had a President that represented a generation the majority of which was less than thirty. Their representative was, for a change, less than fifty,

athletic, still siring children, vigorous, cultured, husband to a woman of beauty and strict to the code of international committment.

It must be interjected, here, that though John Kennedy generated this confidence, idealism and pragmatic philosophy, it was not he that carried it through to its conclusion. To be sure, his death accounted for much sentiment on legislation of which he was in favor. It is, however wrong to credit him with the Civil Rights Bill, the founding of the Department of Urban Affairs, the appointment of Marshall to the Supreme Court, the stabilizing of the American dollar on the world market, and the Veteran's education and Urban renewal projects. The credit must go to Lyndon Johnson. The question of what Kennedy really did perhaps should be asked. The Kennedy contribution as President, then, would appear to be the capturing of the American imagination and ground breaking for such ideas and concepts to become realities under the succeeding Johnson Administration.

The Kennedy magic is best illustrated by the Tom Wicker whose "Tearless" study of Kennedy wept in the best "sob story" tradition. Wicker set out to tell of a Kennedy that was without tears, yet his Kennedy wept. This was perhaps Wicker's subconscious identification with John Kennedy. As the poet Blake said, "...for a tear is an intellectual thing."

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