

President	John F. Kennedy
Chronological Order	35
Life Span	1917-1963
Home State	Massachusetts
Elected	1960
Political Party	Democratic
Vice President	Lyndon B. Johnson
First Lady	Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy
Children	2 sons, 1 daughter
Physical Attributes	6' tall, slender, chestnut brown hair, blue eyes
Undergraduate Education	Harvard University (Political Science)
Military Service	Lieutenant in U.S. Navy during World War II
Profession	Public servant
Other Political Offices	U.S. House of Representatives, U.S. Senate
Nickname	JFK
Family Lineage	Irish
Religious Affiliation	Roman Catholic
Biographical Notes	<p>1. JFK was handsome, charming, charismatic, and very intelligent. He had a great Irish sense of humor, which he used to put people at ease. He was extremely well-read and a gifted writer and orator. He was the youngest man and first Catholic ever to be elected president. Those who knew him well called him Jack, not John.</p>



2. As with FDR, his greatest gift was his ability to inspire the American people. For example, in his inaugural address, he aroused the country by declaring, "Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we will pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and success of liberty." He also urged Americans: "Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country."

3. As a child, he was sickly; he spent a lot of time in bed and in hospitals. Since he could not go out and play, he became a voracious reader. Since he could not do certain things for himself, he learned how to charm others into doing them for him.

4. Kennedy grew up as the second son in a very large (nine children), very wealthy, very competitive family. His father, Joseph P. Kennedy, was an iron-willed man who wanted his eldest son, Joe Jr., to go into politics and become the first Catholic president. Joe Jr.'s death flying a combat mission during World War II shattered these plans. Jack, formerly regarded as ill-suited for politics, surprised Joe Sr. with his willingness to take Joe Jr.'s place.

JFK's paternal grandfather, P.J. Kennedy, was a Democratic Party ward boss in East Boston who served five one-year terms in the Massachusetts House of Representatives and three two-year terms in the state Senate. His maternal grandfather, John F. Fitzgerald ("Honey Fitz"), was a Democratic Party ward boss in Boston's North End who served three terms in the U.S. House of Representatives and two terms as the mayor of Boston. JFK was named after Honey Fitz.

As a boy, Jack was close with Honey Fitz. His grandfather loved taking him on his political rounds or to a Red Sox game at Fenway Park. As an adult, Jack resembled Honey Fitz in personality more than he did either

of his parents. They shared an amiable temperament, a quick wit, a romantic sense of history, a relish for politics, and an impressive capacity for hard work.

5. At Harvard, JFK majored in political science. In the summer of 1937 – after his freshman year – Jack traveled for two and a half months through France, Italy, Germany, and England by automobile with his friend Lem Billings. (They also tried to visit Spain but were denied entry.) Avoiding first-class travel arrangements to accommodate Lem's modest budget, the two met and mingled with people from outside Kennedy's upper-class milieu. He and Lem went out of their way – e.g., by picking up hitchhikers – to speak with ordinary citizens and get their opinions on the questions of the day: the relationship between France and Germany, the behavior of the Nazis, the Spanish Civil War, etc. Jack kept a diary of the trip that was a running commentary on the public events they witnessed and the character of each nation. He was critical of each country, but, unlike Joe Sr. and Joe Jr., his tone was not isolationist. The trip deepened Jack's interest in foreign affairs.

6. In the fall of 1938, Kennedy asked his Harvard dean for permission to take a semester's leave in the spring of 1939 to spend it in Europe, where his father was serving as the U.S. Ambassador Great Britain. He promised to do groundwork – in consultation with his Harvard tutor – on a senior thesis dealing with some aspect of diplomatic history or international law. Once in London, his father sent him on fact-finding missions to various countries on the Continent, including Czechoslovakia, which the Nazis had just occupied. As a result, he had a front-row seat to Neville Chamberlain's appeasement policy towards Germany (which the elder Kennedy supported) and its aftermath.

Kennedy's senior thesis at Harvard, written during the academic year 1939-1940, was entitled "Appeasement at Munich: The Inevitable Result of the Slowness of Conversion of the British Democracy from a Disarmament to a Rearmament Policy." He argued that Chamberlain's appeasement of Hitler was a logical outcome of Britain's lackluster rearmament efforts earlier in the 1930s and the entrenched opposition among the public to another war. He also made the point that in a democracy, politicians are subject to the whims of the electorate and the machinations of competing interests in society, many of which favor collective security but are unwilling to pay for it.

After completing his Harvard coursework, Jack expanded and updated his thesis into a book, entitled *Why England Slept*, published before America entered the war. The book, a best-seller in both the U.S. and the U.K., made the point that America must not repeat Britain's mistakes; it must be ready to fight. JFK donated the profits of the U.K. version of the book to help rebuild Plymouth, England, which had been bombed by the Nazis.

Henry Luce, the publisher of *Time* magazine, wrote the foreword for the book. In it, he wrote, "I cannot recall a single man of my college generation who could have written such an adult book on such a vitally important subject during his senior year at college."

7. Kennedy was a genuine World War II hero. He was the commander of a small patrol-torpedo boat (PT 109) that was rammed and sunk by a Japanese destroyer, and he helped save the surviving crew members with his resourcefulness and courage. First, JFK led his men to a small uninhabited island, swimming for five hours, towing a badly burned crew member by holding the man's life jacket strap in his teeth. (Jack was an expert swimmer; he had been a member of the Harvard swim team.) He then swam to two more small islands until he found a canoe, a drum of water, and some food. He then returned to his men, who were talking to some natives. He gave the natives a coconut with the following message scratched into it: "Eleven alive Native knows Posit and reefs Naura Island Kennedy." The natives took the message to a larger island, and the Navy rescued Kennedy and his men. He was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal, the highest non-combat decoration awarded for heroism by the U.S. Department of the Navy, for his actions.

Years later, a fellow officer, Dick Keresey, gave an interesting personal description of what Kennedy was like in the service. "As a captain, Jack Kennedy was a man of courage, a good PT-boat man, and he was good company. Ranking the virtue of good company on a level with the other two may have been peculiar to those PT boats. We were almost always on the front lines. We knew it was time to pack when the base got showers. When the movies showed up, we were long gone. So, we were highly dependent on conversation to divert ourselves, and Kennedy was a good listener and an amusing talker."

8. In 1945, after getting out of the service, Kennedy served as a newspaper reporter specializing in foreign affairs for the Hearst newspaper chain. He covered the San Francisco conference that founded the United Nations and the 1945 British parliamentary elections. He was one of the few people to predict Winston

Churchill's defeat. JFK also covered the Potsdam Conference at which the "Big Three" – Truman, Stalin, and Churchill/Atlee – discussed: (a) how to administer Germany, which had surrendered nine weeks earlier, (b) how Europe would begin to recover from World War II, and (c) the U.S.S.R.'s commitment to the war in the Pacific. Later, Ted Sorensen wrote of JFK's 1945 experiences in San Francisco and Europe:

All this had sharpened his interest in public affairs and public service. ... Jack Kennedy knew he wanted to be a participant, not an observer. He was, in many ways, an old-fashioned patriot – not in the narrow nationalistic sense but in his deep devotion to the national interest. He had compared firsthand the political and economic systems of many countries on several continents and he greatly preferred our own. He shared [John] Buchan's belief that 'democracy was primarily an attitude of the mind, a spiritual testament' and that 'politics is still the greatest and most honorable adventure.

9. In 1946, Kennedy decided to run for Congress in the 11th Congressional District (John Quincy Adams's old seat), which included the North and West End of Boston, East Boston, Cambridge, and parts of some surrounding towns. In this campaign, he had two distinct advantages and two distinct disadvantages. The advantages were name recognition and his father's money.

The first disadvantage was that he was a carpetbagger with respect to this district. His family's roots ran deep there. His paternal grandfather P.J. Kennedy had owned saloons in East Boston and represented the area in the state legislature; JFK's father was born, came of age, and attended Harvard there. Honey Fitz grew up in the North End and represented the district (then the Ninth) in the U.S. House of Representatives. But Jack had never lived in the district except during his time in college. The second disadvantage was that this was a working-class district, and he came from a wealthy family. To overcome these disadvantages, he began his campaign early and went door-to-door to meet his potential constituents.

At the beginning of the campaign, Kennedy wanted Dave Powers, a shrewd local political operative, to join his team. But Powers had serious doubts about whether Jack, a wealthy political novice, could do "retail" politics, i.e., about whether he could relate to and make connections with ordinary people. So, Powers accompanied Jack to his next event, a speech to a group of Gold Star Mothers, women who had lost sons in World War II.

Jack spoke for about ten minutes about the sacrifices of the war and the need to keep the world at peace. At the end of his speech, he paused, looked at the women, and then said hesitantly, "I think I know how you feel because my mother is a Gold Star Mother too." "Suddenly swarms of women hurried to the platform," Powers recalled, "crowding around him and wishing him luck. ... Now, I had been going to rallies since I was ten ... but this reaction was unlike any I had ever seen." Powers said that the candidate had established a kind of "magical link" with everyone in that room by showing that he understood their grief.

When Jack finally managed to make his way out of the hall, he turned to Dave and asked him how he had done, and Powers told him, "You were terrific."

"Then do you think you'll be with me?" Kennedy asked.

"I am already with you," Dave replied, then they shook hands. Recalling the moment many years later, Powers added sadly, "And I stayed with him from that day until November 22, 1963, when I was riding in the car behind him in Dallas."

10. Kennedy won the 1946 election and served three consecutive terms in the U.S. House of Representatives. As a freshman congressman in 1947, he became good friends with another brand-new congressman, Richard Nixon of California. The two men enjoyed talking about politics and baseball, and Kennedy sent warm letters of congratulations to Nixon when the Californian was elected to the Senate in 1950 and vice president in 1952. Kennedy's father donated \$1,000 to Nixon's Senate campaign.

But the presidential election campaign of 1960 changed Kennedy's opinion of Nixon. He told a friend (in an eerie foreshadowing of Watergate): "Nixon wanted the presidency so bad that there were no depths he wouldn't sink to, to try to achieve his goal. How would you like to have that guy deciding this country's problems when it became an issue of what was best for the country or what was best for Dick?"

As a congressman, Kennedy was moderately liberal but did not always follow the accepted party line. He supported the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and NATO because he felt they helped contain communism in Europe. Like most liberal Democrats, JFK opposed the Taft-Hartley Act and supported the expansion of Social Security benefits. However, he was critical of the Truman administration's Asian policy and blamed Truman for losing China to communism.

11. In 1951, Jack and his brother Robert (Bobby) went on a seven-week fact-finding mission to the Middle East and Asia. They visited Israel, Iran, Pakistan, India, Singapore, Thailand, Malaya, Indochina, Korea, and

Japan. And what they found deepened Jack's longstanding interest in foreign policy. In particular, while he admired the French commander in Hanoi, he sensed that the Viet Minh would defeat the French. Upon his return home, Kennedy commented:

You can never defeat the Communist movement in Indochina until you get the support of the natives, and you won't get the support of the natives as long as they feel that the French are fighting the Communists in order to hold their power there. And I think we shouldn't give the military assistance until the French clearly make an agreement with the natives that at the end of a certain time when the Communists are defeated that the French will pull out and give the country the right of self-determination and the right to govern themselves.

12. In 1952, Jack decided to run for the U.S. Senate against Republican incumbent Henry Cabot Lodge. JFK traveled widely around the state, and his father provided substantial financial support, but the campaign initially floundered due to tensions between Joe Kennedy Sr. and Jack's campaign manager.

The situation improved when Jack's younger brother Bobby became his campaign manager. Up to this point, the two brothers were not particularly close, partly because Bobby was eight years younger than Jack, and partly because they were so different. Jack was tall (6'), and Bobby was not (5'9"); Jack had published a best selling book on foreign policy, and Bobby had struggled academically at Harvard; Jack was a decorated Navy officer during World War II, and Bobby was an apprentice seaman in the waning days of the war; Jack was cool, detached, and ironic, and Bobby was hot-tempered, judgmental, and straightforward.

With Bobby's help, Jack won a hard-fought victory. On Election Night, when Jack addressed his celebrating supporters, he began by expressing special gratitude to Bobby. Lem Billings, Jack's closest friend, described how the relationship between the brothers had changed: "Until then, I don't think Jack had been aware that Bobby had all this tremendous organizing ability. But during the campaign, Bobby had proved himself, again and again, forging a blood partnership that would last until the two of them died."

When Jack was president and Bobby was his attorney general, Bobby was by far Jack's most trusted advisor, on all kinds of topics, not just matters pertaining to the Justice Department. In fact, they were so simpatico that they often completed each other's sentences or communicated simply by giving the other a look.

During the Cuban Missile Crisis, Bobby stood steadfastly – and at first almost alone amongst JFK's advisors – against a preemptive military strike against the missile sites. Bobby felt strongly that: (a) an unannounced military strike gave the Russians no face-saving way out of the crisis, whereas a naval quarantine could, and (b) a "sneak" attack on Cuba was un-American and reminiscent of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. During the latter part of the crisis, Bobby held clandestine meetings with Soviet officials that opened a "backdoor" channel to Khrushchev that helped solve the crisis. On the last night of the crisis, JFK summarized the situation perfectly when he said, "Thank God for Bobby."

13. In 1954, the Viet Minh had the French army surrounded at Dien Bien Phu, and some politicians, including Vice President Richard Nixon, advocated stepping in to help the French. Despite his fervent anti-Communism, Kennedy did not. He said:

To pour money, material, and men into the jungles of Indochina without at least the remote prospect of victory would be dangerously futile and self-destructive. I am of the belief that no amount of military assistance in Indochina can conquer an enemy that is everywhere and, at the same time, nowhere, 'an enemy of the people,' which has the sympathy and support of the people.

President Eisenhower agreed with Kennedy and did not come to the aid of the French. The Viet Minh won the Battle of Dien Bien Phu and, consequently, the French-Indochina War.

14. Throughout his adult life, two health problems plagued JFK: a bad back and Addison's disease. His back was initially injured when he went out for football at Harvard. The injury was exacerbated during the PT-109 incident by the impact of the collision with the destroyer and the physical exertion of the hours of difficult swimming afterward. A person with Addison's has adrenal glands that do not produce enough cortisol and aldosterone, which regulate blood, potassium, and sugar levels. In 1949, Kennedy began taking corticosteroids, which alleviated his Addison's symptoms.

In the fall of 1954, his back problems became severe, and it was suggested that he have spinal fusion surgery. However, he was warned that the corticosteroids he was taking were immunosuppressants that

could make infections more likely and more serious. JFK went ahead with the surgery anyway; a severe infection set in, and he almost died. A priest administered the last rites of the Catholic Church to him twice.

JFK underwent a long and painful recovery, spending most of his time at his father's home in Palm Beach, Florida. To keep his mind off the pain, he undertook a research project: a study of eight U.S. senators who had the courage to take principled stands on important issues, stands that were not popular with their constituents. With the support of Jackie and his Senate staff – especially Ted Sorensen – Jack turned the project into a book, *Profiles in Courage*, that became a #1 *New York Times* bestseller and won the 1957 Pulitzer Prize for Biography. Later as president, he would have to make such a stand on civil rights.

15. JFK came to national prominence at the Democratic National Convention in 1956. First, he narrated a documentary film about the history of the Democratic Party; the performance was broadcast nationwide on radio and television. Second, he gave the main nominating speech for Adlai Stevenson, who won the nomination for president. Then, when Stevenson decided *not* to choose the V.P. candidate but instead let the convention select him, Jack became a candidate for the nomination for vice president.

Eventually, it became a race between him and Estes Kefauver of Tennessee. Kefauver had campaigned hard for the presidency, winning some primaries, so he was the odds-on favorite for the slot. When it became clear that Kefauver would win, Kennedy strode to the podium and asked that the nomination be unanimous for the Tennessean. Both the professional politicians and the millions of television viewers greatly appreciated this magnanimous gesture.

After the 1956 general election, the Kennedy clan gathered in Hyannis Port, and Jack and his father sat down to discuss whether to run for president in 1960. Jack began by laying out all the reasons why he shouldn't run. He was Catholic; he had not yet turned forty; he didn't have the support of the party leadership; he should bide his time. Joe listened, then countered each claim. They went back and forth until the younger man finally began to give way. The father then summed things up: "Just remember, this country is not a private preserve for Protestants. There's a whole new generation out there, and it's filled with sons and daughters of immigrants from all over the world, and those people are going to be mighty proud that one of their own is running for president. And that pride will be your spur; it will give your campaign an intensity we've never seen in public life."

Jack fell quiet, then looked up and smiled. "Well, Dad, I guess there's only one question left. When do we start?"

16. Once he decided to run for president, Kennedy began asserting himself, particularly in foreign affairs, by writing articles and giving speeches. He attacked French policies in Algeria and Southeast Asia because he felt that these imperialist policies would force the emerging countries towards communism. JFK warned against military involvement in Indochina, pointing out the humiliating French defeat there. He also criticized what he believed to be the excessive reliance of the Eisenhower administration on nuclear threats, advocating a more flexible response to international crises. He established moderate positions on civil rights and labor issues.

Concerning the 1960 Democratic nomination for president, Kennedy aide Larry O'Brien said initially, "We had the field to ourselves." By deciding to run before the other candidates, Jack was following his personal political mantra: campaign early, campaign often, campaign hard. During the campaign, Kennedy's staff recorded the names and addresses of people they met on index cards. By the time of the election, they had ten thousand cards. In 1960, Joe Kennedy bought Jack a twin-engine, forty-seat aircraft to help him campaign. It was the first private aircraft used in a presidential campaign. JFK named it the "Caroline," after his daughter.

17. At the Democratic National Convention in 1960, Kennedy won the nomination for president on the first ballot, with Lyndon Johnson finishing second. There was no love lost between the two campaign staffs – in particular, Robert Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson despised each other. Moreover, JFK's team had assured labor unions and civil rights organizations that Johnson would not be Kennedy's running mate.

But once he had the nomination in hand and studied the Electoral College landscape, JFK realized that to defeat Richard Nixon in the general election, he needed to win Texas and do well in the rest of the South, too. So, without consulting his advisors – not even his brother Bobby – Kennedy asked Johnson to be his running mate, and Johnson accepted.

The strategy worked perfectly. Johnson campaigned very effectively throughout the South, and on election day, the ticket won seven southern states (including Texas), plus the border state of Missouri. The election was extremely close. Kennedy won Illinois (27 electoral votes) 50.0 to 49.8 percent and Texas (24 electoral votes) 50.5 to 48.5 percent, which gave him a 303 to 209 victory in the Electoral College. Kennedy

received 49.7 percent of the popular vote; Nixon received 49.6 percent.

18. The 1960 presidential campaign featured, for the first time, nationally televised debates between the two candidates. Eisenhower had counseled Nixon not to accept the proposal for debates because he felt that the lesser-known Kennedy needed the national exposure more than Nixon. But Nixon – a star debater in college and a wily courtroom litigator before going into politics – could not resist the opportunity to spar with JFK.

What Kennedy understood thoroughly – and Nixon did not – was that television is a *visual* medium. Consequently, how the candidate looked would be almost as important as what he said. Kennedy spent the week before the first debate campaigning in California and sunning himself in the afternoons on the roof of his hotel to maintain his tan. On the other hand, Nixon kept giving speeches and shaking hands at such a frenetic pace that he was ten pounds underweight. On top of this, Nixon refused to use professional makeup on the night of the debate. Instead, he used "Lazy Shave," a pasty powder typically used to hide a five o'clock shadow.

So, when the audience – 70 million viewers – watched the first debate, Kennedy looked great – cool, calm, and composed – and Nixon looked ill – hollow-eyed, shirt collar too big for his neck, with sweat dripping down his face. At the end of the debate, Nixon's running mate Henry Cabot Lodge, who was watching from Texas, said: "That son-of-a-bitch just cost us the election." (N.B. The 70 million viewer audience was approximately two-thirds of the adult population of the United States at the time.)

19. During the 1960 campaign, some people (but not Nixon himself) began to make Kennedy's Catholic faith an issue. JFK helped diffuse the situation with a compelling speech at a conference of Protestant ministers in Houston, Texas. In it, he said:

I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute, where no Catholic prelate would tell the president (should he be Catholic) how to act, and no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote; where no church or church school is granted any public funds or political preference; and where no man is denied public office merely because his religion differs from the president who might appoint him or the people who might elect him. ...

For contrary to common newspaper usage, I am not the Catholic candidate for president. I am the Democratic Party's candidate for president, who happens also to be a Catholic. I do not speak for my church on public matters, and the church does not speak for me. ...

But if the time should ever come — and I do not concede any conflict to be even remotely possible — when my office would require me to either violate my conscience or violate the national interest, then I would resign the office; and I hope any conscientious public servant would do the same.

After the speech, Kennedy answered questions – some quite pointed – from ministers in the audience for thirty minutes. He did not know what the questions would be in advance, but he answered them effectively and respectfully.

Lyndon Johnson often addressed the issue of JFK's religion by telling his audience a story. During World War II, Johnson explained, when JFK's older brother volunteered for a dangerous bombing mission over Germany, "nobody asked him what church he went to." And after he "went down in a burning plane over the English Channel so that we could have free speech and a free press and live as free men, not a soul got up in a pulpit and asked what church he went to."

20. Late in the 1960 campaign, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was arrested at a sit-in in Atlanta and then taken from his cell in the middle of the night in handcuffs and leg irons to the Georgia State Prison in Reidsville, two hundred miles away. His sentence was four months of hard labor, and the prison was infamous for having cruel guards and violent prisoners. After the sentencing, King's wife, Coretta, was distraught and called Harris Wofford, a Kennedy aide who was King's friend. She told Wofford, "They are going to kill him. I know they are going to kill him."

Wofford told his supervisor, Sargent Shriver, about the call from Coretta and suggested that JFK call her and comfort her. Shriver got in his car and raced to catch Kennedy before he boarded a plane. JFK immediately agreed to make the call and said to Mrs. King, "I want to express my concern about your husband. I know this must be very hard on you. I understand that you are expecting a baby, and I just wanted you to know that I was thinking about you and Dr. King. If there is anything I can do to help, please feel free to call me." Then, after some backroom political maneuvers, Bobby Kennedy called the judge who had imprisoned King and convinced him to release the minister on bail. The Kennedy brothers did these

things even though they knew it might hurt them in the South.

Meanwhile, Nixon remained silent about King's predicament. He told his press secretary, Herb Klein, "I think Dr. King is getting a bum rap. But despite my feelings in this respect, it would be completely improper for me or any other lawyer to call the judge." So, when reporters asked Klein about Dr. King's situation, he replied, "No comment." Jackie Robinson, the civil rights pioneer who had integrated major league baseball, then spoke directly to Nixon and tried to convince him to say something. Nixon refused, and after the meeting, Robinson muttered, "Nixon doesn't deserve to win."

Nixon's silence cost him dearly. Martin Luther King Sr., a prominent Atlanta minister, now decided to endorse Kennedy publicly despite their religious differences. At the joyous welcome-home service for his rescued son, the elder King told his congregation, "I had expected to vote against Senator Kennedy because of his religion. But now, he can be my president, Catholic, or whatever he is. It took courage to call my daughter-in-law at a time like this. He has the moral courage to stand up for what he knows is right. I've got my votes, and I've got a suitcase, and I'm going to take them up there and dump them in his lap."

Kennedy headquarters put together a pamphlet entitled "The Case of Martin Luther King," which consisted of extended comments on the incident previously made to the press by Coretta King, Martin Luther King Sr., Reverend Ralph Abernathy, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and Dr. Garner Taylor. The comments were appreciative of Kennedy's efforts and critical of Nixon's behavior. In the pamphlet, Abernathy said, "it is time for all of us to take off our Nixon buttons. ... Since Mr. Nixon has been silent through all of this, I am going to return his silence when I go to the voting booth."

Two million copies of the pamphlet were printed on light blue paper and delivered to Black churches the Sunday before election day. This "Blue Bomb" helped Kennedy win sixty-eight percent of the African American vote in 1960, up from Stevenson's sixty-one percent in 1956. In eleven states, Black voters gave Kennedy the margin of support he needed to win.

21. Part of the reason Kennedy was able to empathize with Dr. King and the civil rights movement was that he had experienced anti-Irish and anti-Catholic bias growing up in Boston. George Smathers, JFK's best friend in the Senate, said, "I think he felt that, as an Irishman, somewhere along the line, he'd been discriminated against." Even as president, Kennedy felt that his ancestry would leave him blackballed from Boston's blue-blood Somerset Club, where he once overheard a member refer to the Democrats as the party of "the help."

Kennedy once reprimanded the skipper of the presidential yacht when he began to pull into the Edgartown Yacht Club – a WASP bastion on Martha's Vineyard – without permission. "My God," Kennedy exclaimed, "they'd have my hide if I just barged in there."

22. Kennedy appointed a moderate cabinet. He chose Republicans for the key posts of secretary of the treasury, secretary of defense, and national security advisor. He selected his brother Bobby for attorney general. Neither the cabinet nor Kennedy's key White House positions included women or racial minorities.

23. As president, Kennedy established the Peace Corps, which still exists today, by executive order in 1961. The Peace Corps was a cadre of several hundred, later several thousand, primarily youthful volunteers who brought their technical skills directly to the people of developing nations. They were teachers, doctors, nurses, agricultural agents, carpenters, and technicians of all kinds. They lived with the host country's people in their villages, spoke their languages, and helped them develop their natural and human resources. Over two hundred thousand Americans have served in one hundred thirty-nine different countries through this program.

JFK's brother-in-law, Sargent Shriver, was the driving force behind the creation of the Peace Corps and served, for five years, as its first director.

24. Shortly after his inauguration, Kennedy began holding televised press conferences approximately every two weeks in which he answered questions from reporters. Without knowing the questions beforehand, he typically gave clear, concise, thoughtful answers to queries on a wide array of issues. He also used his wit to make the press conferences fun and entertaining, and they drew an average of eighteen million viewers per show. JFK's use of televised press conferences to keep the American public informed was analogous to FDR's use of his radio Fireside Chats to do the same thing. In contrast, President Eisenhower hated giving press conferences and avoided doing so whenever he could.

JFK's successes in these press conferences were the product of hard work. Before each one, the State Department prepared a large briefing book listing possible questions and answers on foreign policy. The Council of Economic Advisers prepared a list of potential questions and answers on economic topics. The

weekly reports from the departments and agencies were gathered. Kennedy pored over these materials before each press conference. At breakfast on the day of the press conference, he would field sample questions from members of his staff. "It's like preparing for a final exam twice a month," Kennedy commented.

25. In the last days of the Eisenhower administration, the CIA trained a force of 1,400 Cuban exiles, mostly from Miami, for an invasion of Cuba with the goal of overthrowing Fidel Castro. When Kennedy became president, the task force, which had been training in Guatemala, was ready to go. Kennedy felt political pressure to go ahead with the invasion; he did not want to appear weak on communism after Eisenhower had already decided to overthrow Castro, especially since he had accused Truman of losing China to the communists,

The invasion took place on April 17, 1961, on a beach bordering an inlet called the Bay of Pigs. The attack failed miserably. It was ill-conceived, incompetently planned, and poorly executed. Kennedy refused to provide air cover, which did not help. The 1,400 men were all either killed or captured.

Kennedy accepted responsibility for the failure, and he was not hurt politically. The incident helped him realize the risks involved in hasty, dramatic actions in foreign arenas that the United States could not control.

26. By 1961, United States Supreme Court decisions had ruled segregated interstate public buses and bus stations unconstitutional, but these laws were not enforced in the South. In May 1961, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) organized the Freedom Rides to challenge the non-enforcement. During the rides, Black and white civil rights activists rode interstate buses, often while seated together, into southern states. They also attempted to use "White Only" waiting rooms and restrooms in southern bus stations.

In Anniston, Alabama, a mob of angry whites violently attacked the Freedom Ride's Greyhound bus and set it on fire; the Freedom Riders were severely beaten. A Trailways bus arrived in Anniston an hour later and was boarded by KKK members who beat up those Freedom Riders. The bus was also attacked in Birmingham, and several riders were beaten in front of the press. Reports of the violence reached Attorney General Robert Kennedy, who urged restraint on the part of Freedom Riders and sent his assistant, John Seigenthaler, to Birmingham. CORE agreed to halt the Freedom Ride in Birmingham on May 14, with the remaining riders flying to New Orleans.

John Lewis and nine others from the Nashville Student Movement were undeterred by the violence. They replaced the original riders for the next leg of the Freedom Ride from Birmingham to Montgomery. Greyhound initially refused to allow any of their drivers to drive that route, but Bobby Kennedy convinced the company to make a driver available. The bus left Birmingham for Montgomery on May 20; Floyd Mann, the Alabama Director of Public Safety, provided an escort of state trooper vehicles. John Seigenthaler was already in Montgomery.

At the Montgomery city limits, Mann handed off the responsibility for the riders' safety to the Montgomery Public Safety Commissioner Louis Sullivan, whose jurisdiction began at the city limits. Sullivan, an ardent segregationist, chose not to protect the Freedom Riders; their bus arrived at the Montgomery bus station at 10:23 a.m. They were attacked there by a crowd of violent white protesters with baseball bats, clubs, and metal pipes. Several riders were injured in the attack, and so was John Seigenthaler. While attempting to rescue two white female Freedom Riders, Seigenthaler was hit over the head with a metal pipe and "lay unconscious on the ground for half an hour." Floyd Mann, who had stationed his troopers a few blocks away despite lacking jurisdiction, stepped in to protect the riders. He fired his gun in the air, yelling, "There'll be no killing here today." When a white attacker raised his bat for a final blow at an unconscious Freedom Rider, Mann put his gun to the attacker's head and said, "One more swing, and you're dead." Mann's troopers restored order at the terminal.

On May 21, Martin Luther King, Jr., Ralph Abernathy, and others from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference came to Montgomery to support the Freedom Riders. That evening, they joined the Freedom Riders for an evening service in Abernathy's First Baptist Church while some 3,000 angry white protesters yelled outside, burning a car and threatening to burn the church. Kennedy sent 500 U.S. Marshals to the church, headed by U.S. Deputy Attorney General Byron White. With the help of Floyd Mann and his state troopers, the marshals managed to keep the mob at bay; it was finally dispersed with the help of the National Guard at midnight.

As a result of the national publicity generated by the Freedom Rides, Robert Kennedy successfully petitioned the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) to adopt stronger regulations and desegregate interstate transportation. The ICC ruling ordered all interstate transportation terminals, restaurants, waiting rooms, and restrooms to be desegregated beginning November 1. The speed with which the Kennedy



administration achieved this was stunning.

27. By the spring of 1961, America's technological prestige had suffered twin blows from the U.S.S.R.'s space program. In October 1957, they launched the first satellite, Sputnik, to orbit the Earth, and in April 1961 they put the first man, Yuri Gagarin, into space. After Gagarin's flight, Kennedy began looking for a project that would "leapfrog" the Soviets and give America a significant "first" in the space race.

As a result, in May 1961, JFK made the space program a national priority by setting the goal that America would send a man to the moon and back within the decade. He was prescient in realizing that unexpected benefits – especially new technologies – would result from this quest. In a speech at Rice University in September 1962, he said:

We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one that we are unwilling to postpone, and one that we intend to win, and the others too. ...

Many years ago, the great British explorer George Mallory, who was to die on Mt. Everest, was asked why did he want to climb it. He said, 'Because it is there.' Well, space is there, and we're going to climb it, and the moon and the planets are there, and new hopes for knowledge and peace are there. And, therefore, as we set sail, we ask God's blessing on the most hazardous and dangerous and greatest adventure on which man has ever embarked.

By the time he sat down, his memorable words were seared into the imaginations of every aerospace engineer, mechanical engineer, technician, computer programmer, and astronaut at NASA. It was one of those rare moments when an address provides inspiration and motivation for years to come. Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin landed on the moon and returned safely back to Earth in July 1969.

28. The Kennedys were one of the youngest first families to occupy the White House. At the time of his inauguration, Jack was 43, First Lady Jacqueline (Jackie) was 31, daughter Caroline was 3, and son John Jr. was less than a year old.

Jackie was an elegant and cultured First Lady. She was of French descent and spent her junior year in college studying French history and art history at the Sorbonne in Paris. She graduated from George Washington University with a B.A. in French literature. Jackie spoke French fluently and had a lifelong passion for French fashion, art, and literature.

In June 1961, she accompanied President Kennedy to Paris, and she – not JFK – captured the city's imagination and affection. Crowds lined up on the street to see her. Jack's meetings with French President de Gaulle did not go well, but Jackie quickly established a rapport with the French leader and his Minister of Culture, Andre Malraux. At the Kennedy's final dinner in Paris, Jackie told Malraux that she would love to bring the Mona Lisa – a French national treasure – to tour America, and he made it happen. Jackie was such a hit in Paris that at a press conference there, Jack quipped, "I am the man who accompanied Jacqueline Kennedy to Paris, and I have enjoyed it."

During JFK's presidency, the White House became a prominent platform for showcasing American performing arts, with Jack and Jackie hosting performances of ballet, opera, poetry readings, classical music, jazz, and Shakespearean plays, effectively elevating the arts to a national stage and making cultural events a significant part of the political landscape; this included bringing renowned artists like Pablo Casals to perform at the White House. The Kennedy cultural legacy lives on today at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., and through the annual Kennedy Center Honors given to five honorees in the performing arts for their lifetime contributions to American culture. The Honors have been presented annually since 1978, culminating each December in a nationally broadcast gala at the Kennedy Center.

29. After the Kennedys moved into the White House, Jackie was dismayed to find that the mansion's rooms were furnished with undistinguished artwork and pieces of furniture with little historical significance. She made it her first major project as First Lady to restore the historical character of the White House. She also decided to make the family quarters more attractive and suitable for family life by adding a kitchen on the family floor and new rooms for her children. The \$50,000 that had been appropriated for the restoration of the White House was quickly exhausted. Continuing the project, she established a fine arts committee to oversee and fund the restoration process. A White House guidebook was sold to solve the funding problem.

On February 14, 1962, Jackie, accompanied by Charles Collingwood of CBS News, took American television

viewers on a tour of the restored White House. On the tour, she stated, "I feel so strongly that the White House should have as fine a collection of American pictures as possible. It's so important ... the setting in which the presidency is presented to the world, to foreign visitors. The American people should be proud of it. We have such a great civilization. So many foreigners don't realize it." The TV show was watched by 56 million television viewers in the United States and was later distributed to 106 countries. Jackie won an Emmy award for the show.

30. At the end of World War II, Germany was divided into four zones: the British, French, and American zones in the west and a Soviet zone in the east. Berlin, which was 110 miles inside the Soviet zone, was also divided into four parts. The Soviets guaranteed the other three nations access to Berlin through their zone.

In May 1949, the three Western zones unified to form the nation of West Germany. In October 1949, the Soviet zone became East Germany. The three western parts of Berlin became known as West Berlin; the eastern part became known as East Berlin. Travel from West Berlin to West Germany through East Germany was permitted.

By early 1961, many East Germans were using the path from West Berlin to West Germany to emigrate to the West. The East German government became very concerned and complained about this to the Soviet Union. In response, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev proposed a treaty – to be signed with East Germany and, perhaps, the U.S.A. – that would reunify Berlin under East German control. Control of Berlin would allow East Germany to solve its emigration problem by denying travel from Berlin to West Germany.

Kennedy and Khrushchev met at a summit meeting in Vienna in June 1961. At the meeting, which was very contentious, Kennedy made it clear that any treaty interfering with U.S. rights to West Berlin would be regarded as an act of war. Khrushchev would not back down, and the two leaders did not come to any agreement on the issue in Vienna. Nuclear war seemed to be a real possibility.

After the summit meeting, the Soviet Union and East Germany solved the emigration problem in a different way: by building the Berlin Wall. The Wall was a guarded, twelve-foot-tall concrete barrier topped with barbed wire that encircled West Berlin, separating it from East Berlin and East Germany. The Wall kept East Germans out of West Berlin. Travel was allowed from West Berlin to West Germany. Kennedy told Kenny O'Donnell that this was Khrushchev's "way out of his predicament. It's not a very nice solution, but a wall is a hell of a lot better than a war."

31. In the wake of the Supreme Court's 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, James Meredith tried to integrate the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss) by applying for admission in 1961. When he informed the university that he was African American, his admission was delayed and obstructed, first by school officials and then by Mississippi Governor Ross Barnett. Multiple attempts by Meredith, accompanied by federal officials, to enroll were physically blocked. Hoping to avoid violence and ensure Meredith's enrollment, President Kennedy and Attorney General Robert Kennedy had a series of unproductive telephone negotiations with Barnett.

On September 30, 1962, Meredith, accompanied by twenty-four U.S. marshals, arrived at Ole Miss. Later, 538 federal law enforcement officers arrived on campus to support Meredith's attempt to register the next day. Before the day was over, a violent riot erupted on campus. Incited by the KKK and other segregationists, an armed mob of 2,500 rioters assaulted reporters and federal officers, burned and looted property, and hijacked vehicles. Reporters, federal law enforcement officers, and U.S. Deputy Attorney General Nicolas Katzenbach sheltered in the Lyceum, the university's administrative building, into the late morning of October 1. One hundred and sixty federal law enforcement officers were injured, including twenty-eight who received gunshot wounds while defending the Lyceum from an attack. The mob killed a journalist and a bystander during the riot. After being informed about the riot, President Kennedy invoked the Insurrection Act of 1807 and sent 13,000 U.S. Army troops to quell it. Meredith was then able to register and attend Ole Miss. Meredith's entry was the first integration of any public educational facility in Mississippi.

The suppression of the riot was a significant turning point in the civil rights movement because it showed that Kennedy would use federal troops to combat the segregationist tactic of "massive resistance." (N.B. Massive resistance was a political strategy created by Senator Harry F. Byrd (D-VA) and others to fight integration by shutting down schools.)

32. In foreign affairs, the seminal event of JFK's presidency was the Cuban Missile Crisis. In the fall of 1962, the U.S.S.R. secretly brought medium and intermediate-range nuclear missiles into Cuba and began building launch facilities. When an American spy plane detected these activities, Kennedy and his advisors agreed that this was unacceptable and that something must be done to remove the missiles. The question was: what

should be done?

Kennedy was under tremendous pressure, especially from his military advisors, to launch a pre-emptive strike to take out the missiles and launch facilities. However, he felt that, since both Cubans and Russians would be killed in such an attack, this could start a nuclear war with the U.S.S.R. Instead, he imposed a naval blockade on Cuba, presented the United Nations with photographic evidence of the existence of missiles and launch facilities, and then began negotiating with the Russians. In the final settlement, the U.S.S.R. removed all the missiles and dismantled the launch facilities, and the U.S. promised: (a) not to invade Cuba and (b) to remove some missiles from Turkey. Throughout the crisis, Kennedy was cool-headed and steady-handed, and his prestige increased significantly as a result.

When the news arrived that the crisis was over, Ted Sorensen returned to his office, picked up a copy of *Profiles in Courage*, and read to his secretary part of the introductory quotation JFK had selected. It was a quotation by Edmund Burke about the courage shown by Charles James Fox: "He may live long, he may do much. But here is the summit. He can never exceed what he does this day."

33. In the spring of 1963, two events spurred Kennedy into action on civil rights for African Americans. First, from April 3 to May 21, 1963, a series of nonviolent protests in Birmingham, Alabama, led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., were brutally suppressed by local police and fire units. JFK and the nation watched – on national television – nonviolent protesters being hit by powerful streams of water from fire hoses and being attacked by vicious police dogs. Second, Alabama Governor George Wallace "stood in the schoolhouse door" to prevent two Black students from integrating the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. On June 11, JFK federalized the Alabama National Guard and sent 600 troops to Tuscaloosa to force Wallace to step aside and allow the students to register, which they did.

That evening, Kennedy made a prime-time, nationally televised address, his "Report to the American People on Civil Rights," in which he framed the issue and outlined his response.

This is not a sectional issue. This is not even a legal, or legislative issue alone ... We are confronted primarily with a moral issue. It is as old as the Scriptures and as clear as the American Constitution. The heart of the question is whether all Americans are to be afforded equal rights and equal opportunities ... One hundred years of delay have passed since President Lincoln freed the slaves, yet their heirs, their grandsons, are not yet fully free ... Next week, I shall ask the Congress of the United States to act to make a commitment that it has not made in this century to the proposition that race has no place in American life and law.

On June 19, Kennedy sent his civil rights bill to Congress; it became law one year later as the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The act outlaws discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. It prohibits unequal application of voter registration requirements, racial segregation in schools and public accommodations, and employment discrimination. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 is one of the most significant legislative achievements in American history.

Kennedy supported civil rights despite knowing it would cost the Democratic Party political support in the South. Upon signing the Civil Rights Act of 1964, President Johnson said to an aide, "We just lost the South for a generation." By proposing the Civil Rights Act, Kennedy was living up to the creed he had enunciated in *Profiles in Courage*: "A man does what he must do in spite of personal consequences, in spite of obstacles and danger and pressure – and that is the basis for all human morality."

After President Kennedy finished his speech on June 11, civil rights activists were elated, and Medgar Evers, the field secretary of the NAACP in Jackson, Mississippi, hurried home to discuss the speech with his wife and three children. A sniper gunned him down as he was walking toward his front door.

34. As president, Kennedy struggled with the question of what to do in Vietnam. He was adamantly against sending U.S. ground troops but did not want to lose South Vietnam to communism. As a compromise, he increased the number of U.S. military advisors in Vietnam from approximately 900 (under Eisenhower) to approximately 16,000. According to Kenny O'Donnell, JFK planned to get out of Vietnam after the 1964 presidential election. However, most historians believe that there is no way of knowing whether Kennedy would have escalated our involvement by sending U.S. ground troops in, as President Johnson did. After JFK's death, Ted Sorensen – one of Kennedy's closest advisors – commented, "I do not believe he knew in his last weeks what he was going to do."

35. Throughout Kennedy's presidency, tensions with the Soviet Union were high – the Cold War was in full swing – and Berlin was a particularly contentious issue for the two superpowers because of the Berlin Wall.

In June 1963, Kennedy flew to West Berlin and gave one of the finest speeches of the Cold War, a speech that lifted the spirits of the citizens of West Berlin by expressing his solidarity with them. One million West Berliners lined up along his parade route, and 300,000 jammed into a square to hear him speak. He began by saying, "Two thousand years ago, the proudest boast was "Civis Romanus sum." [I am a Roman citizen.] Today, in the world of freedom, the proudest boast is "Ich bin ein Berliner." [I am a Berliner.] Then he continued:

There are many people in the world who really don't understand, or say they don't, what is the great issue between the free world and the Communist world. Let them come to Berlin! There are some who say that communism is the wave of the future. Let them come to Berlin! And there are some who say in Europe and elsewhere we can work with the Communists. Let them come to Berlin! And there are even a few who say that it is true that communism is an evil system, but it permits us to make economic progress. Lass' sie nach Berlin kommen! [Let them come to Berlin!] ...

Freedom has many difficulties and democracy is not perfect, but we have never had to put a wall up to keep our people in, to prevent them from leaving us. ...

All free men, wherever they may live, are citizens of Berlin, and, therefore, as a free man, I take pride in the words "Ich bin ein Berliner."

36. When Joseph Kennedy was Ambassador to the United Kingdom in the late 1930s, Jack became close friends with British aristocrat David Ormsby-Gore, who was about his age. Ormsby-Gore went on to be a member of Parliament and British minister of state for foreign affairs. In the latter role, he became an expert at negotiating with the Soviet Union and knowledgeable about disarmament policy.

Two months after Kennedy's inauguration, British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan asked Jack if he had an opinion on who should be the new British ambassador to the U.S. JFK replied immediately, "I'd like David," and Ormsby-Gore was chosen for the job. While serving in that role, Ormsby-Gore was a regular at the White House for both policy discussions and social occasions, essentially becoming a member of the extended Kennedy clan.

Ormsby-Gore advised JFK on many foreign policy issues, including the Cuban Missile Crisis. In 1963, Ormsby-Gore, JFK, and Harold Macmillan designed the Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT), in which the U.K., U.S., and U.S.S.R. banned all nuclear weapons tests except those performed underground. The PTBT did not halt the proliferation of nuclear arms, but its enactment did coincide with a substantial decline in the concentration of radioactive particles in the atmosphere. It was the first nuclear test ban treaty ever signed. The treaty went into effect on October 10, 1963. Since then, 123 other countries have become parties to the pact.

37. On August 7, 1963, Jackie Kennedy went into labor five and a half weeks early while at Cape Cod. She was helicoptered to the nearby Otis Air Force Base hospital, where she delivered a four-pound, ten-and-a-half-ounce baby boy at 1 p.m. Like most prematurely born infants, he was struggling to breathe. Care for premature babies in 1963 was nowhere near the level it is today; if he had been born today, he would have had a 95 percent likelihood of survival. Under the state of medicine in his day, his fate was dangerously uncertain.

President Kennedy flew to Otis Air Force Base by jet and arrived at 1:35 p.m. He was briefed on the baby's condition and visited briefly with a groggy Jackie. JFK then asked the base chaplain to baptize the baby immediately; the infant was christened Patrick Bouvier Kennedy, after Jack's paternal grandfather and Jackie's father.

By 2 p.m. the next day, the news was grim. The doctors had decided to place Patrick in a huge hyperbaric chamber to force oxygen into his lungs. The president wanted to be close to his son, so he and Dave Powers took over a vacant room near the chamber and intended to spend the night there.

Patrick's condition continued deteriorating, and at 2 a.m., the staff woke Jack and Dave. Also, Bobby Kennedy arrived. The three men kept a vigil outside the chamber for the next two hours. At 4 a.m., the doctors had to admit they could not stop the inevitable. The baby was taken out of the chamber and placed in his father's arms, still alive. With Dave and Bobby at his side, Jack cradled his son as he took his last breaths. "He put up quite a fight," Jack said softly. "He was a beautiful baby."

Jackie was too weak to attend the funeral Mass and burial. After the others filed out of the chapel after the Mass, Jack stayed behind and was overwhelmed with grief. "He literally put his arms around the casket," like he was going to carry it out, said Cardinal Cushing, the family friend who said the Mass. Finally, Cushing said, "Come on, Jack. Let's go. God is good."

Patrick changed JFK as a husband and father. Everybody close to him noticed it. He and Jackie now shared a deeper affection for each other, and Jack was not shy about showing it. For the first time anyone could recall, they were seen holding hands in public.

38. On August 28, 1963, the March on Washington was held in D.C. The purpose of the march, which had 200,000 participants, was to advocate for civil and economic rights for African Americans. At the march, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., standing at the foot of the Lincoln Memorial, delivered his historic "I Have a Dream" speech. In it, he said, "I have a dream that little children will one day live in a nation where they will be judged not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." And he dreamed that all men would "be able to join hands and say in the words of the old Negro spiritual, 'Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we're free at last!'"

In the Oval Office, President Kennedy watched the speech on television, totally absorbed. He had never been inside a church when King was on the pulpit; he had never witnessed the rolling cadence and rhythm in its fullness. JFK, who was a great orator himself, turned to an aide and said, "He's damn good."

After the march concluded, Kennedy invited the main speakers back to the White House. The march had been nonviolent, and Kennedy "had relief written all over his face," according to Roy Wilkins. John Lewis noticed that Kennedy and King seemed to have a newfound respect and admiration for each other. He sensed that Kennedy understood King's central role in the day's success: "I felt that he believed that Martin Luther King, Jr., his presence, his speech ... helped him make a mass assembly of humanity so peaceful and so orderly." Lewis recalled that King "was just overjoyed. He was very happy and proud – not grinning but really beaming."

39. On November 22, 1963, Jack and Jackie Kennedy and Texas Governor John Connally were riding in an open convertible in a motorcade in downtown Dallas, Texas; Lyndon and Lady Bird Johnson were in another open convertible two cars back. Spectators applauded as the vehicles drove past.

Then a sharp, cracking noise rang out. Most bystanders thought that it was a motorcycle backfire or perhaps the sound of a firecracker set off in the crowd. But John Connally – who had hunted all his life – knew the instant he heard it that it was a shot from a high-powered rifle. More shots rang out, both Kennedy and Connally were hit, and the two convertibles sped off to nearby Parkland Hospital.

Kennedy and Connally were taken to the emergency room; the Johnsons were taken to a secure room inside the hospital. Secret service agents feared a conspiracy and urged Johnson to get on Air Force One and fly to Washington immediately. But LBJ refused to leave until he knew the president's condition.

LBJ stood leaning against a wall, with Lady Bird sitting beside him in a chair, until Kenny O'Donnell – one of JFK's closest friends – came to the door about thirty-five minutes later. Lady Bird took one look at the "face of Kenny O'Donnell who loved him [Kennedy] so much" and knew that the president was dead.

40. At about 4:30 a.m. on the day after the assassination, the autopsy was complete, and the coffin was brought to the White House by ambulance and carried into the East Room by a Marine honor guard. Jackie had sent word that she wanted the room to look "as it did when Lincoln's body lay there." A catafalque – a black stand on a black base – had been found and set up in the center of the room. A group of Kennedy aides was standing in a corner of the room when the coffin was carried in and placed on the catafalque. Jackie and Bobby followed, with Kenny O'Donnell and Larry O'Brien trailing behind. Walking over to the coffin, Jackie knelt on the floor and rested her cheek on the flag that draped the coffin. Then she put her arms around it. Anyone who was not crying before was crying now.

Robert Kennedy's face had remained pale and sad, but set, resolute, and, apparently, calm. He went up to the Lincoln Bedroom, still seeming "controlled," said Charles Spalding, who went upstairs with him. Kennedy went in, closed the door, and according to Spalding, "Then I just heard him break down ... I heard him sob and say 'Why, God?'"

41. When Jack won the presidency, Joseph Kennedy Sr. wanted two things: Bobby to be attorney general and Edward (Teddy), Jack's youngest brother, to take Jack's Senate seat. Jack was not thrilled with either idea, but he went along with them. When it was brought up that Bobby was only thirty-five years old and was a political operator, not an experienced lawyer, Jack deflected the charge of nepotism with humor: "I can't see that it's wrong to give him a little legal experience before he goes out to practice law."

There was also a problem with Teddy and the Senate seat: he was not yet the required thirty years of age. To get around this, the Kennedys asked Massachusetts Governor Foster Furcolo to appoint Kennedy family friend Ben Smith as interim senator for Jack's unexpired term, which he did. Teddy then won the seat in a

special election in 1962 and occupied it for the next forty-six years. He served with distinction in the Senate, earning the nickname "The Lion of the Senate." Despite being an unabashedly liberal Democrat, he was often willing to work with Republicans to get things done.

42. Eunice Kennedy Shriver, JFK's sister, founded Special Olympics in 1968 to honor their mentally challenged sister, Rosemary. Special Olympics is now the world's largest sports organization for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. It provides year-round training and competitions to 5.7 million athletes and Unified Sports partners in 172 countries.

43. JFK often used humor to connect with his audience. When he appeared with Nixon and New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller, a liberal Republican, at the Al Smith Dinner for Catholic charities late in the 1960 campaign, Kennedy's opening remarks were: "Cardinal Spellman is the only man so widely respected in American politics that he could bring together amicably, at the same banquet table ... two political leaders who are increasingly apprehensive about the November election – who have long eyed each other suspiciously and who have disagreed so strongly, both publically and privately – Vice President Nixon and Governor Rockefeller."

44. One Sunday during the 1960 general election campaign, Kennedy and Dave Powers were on the road and decided to attend Mass at a local church. When they reached the church door, Powers told JFK that a Catholic entering a church for the first time is granted three wishes. After they walked through the door, Jack turned to Powers and said, with a straight face, "New York. Illinois. California."

See the next page for a list of references.

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