

II 1968: THE HARD YEAR

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thy's Marauders. But he alone of the major Democratic politicians who disliked the war believed that something could be done about it. So he had vision and, what was better, the nerve to act on it. When Allard K. Lowenstein approached him, McCarthy was ready for the call.

As much as any one man could be, Lowenstein was founder of the dump-Johnson movement. A slight, intense, bespectacled man in his thirties, he was already an experienced liberal. Though passionate, he did not entertain extreme political views. Lowenstein had specialized in youth work and hated the war especially for its effect on the young. He decided early that President Johnson had to go if the alienated young were to be saved from dropping out or sliding off into the lunatic fringe. He began traveling around the country to focus anti-war sentiment on political objects. Advertisements against the war by college editors, Peace Corps returnees, and others sprang up behind him. In the summer of 1967 he began urging Robert Kennedy to run for President. Senator Kennedy's own staff was for it, so was his wife Ethel. But the Camelotians advised him to wait until 1972. Only Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and Richard Goodwin, both former special assistants to President Kennedy, of the old official family favored his candidacy, and for reasons that were more moral than practical. Sorensen, Salinger, *et al.*, who in the spirit of Camelot were more interested in seizing power than scoring moral points, were not impressed. They persuaded Robert Kennedy, who was, after all, a Camelotian himself. And he understood that Lowenstein, John Kenneth Galbraith, and the other dump-Johnson leaders hoped he would run for their own purposes, not his. They wanted him because he had the biggest personal following of any available politician. Many were outside the Kennedy connection and so not interested in restoring Camelot. In the Kennedy manner, Robert headed the family loyalists and party professionals who told him to wait, though his instinct was to run. Lowenstein told him, "The people who think that the future and the honor of this country are at stake because of Vietnam don't give a shit what Mayor Daley and Governor Y and Chairman Z think. We're going to do it, and we're going to win, and it's a shame you're not with us because you could have been President."*

Lowenstein then began knocking on the doors of anti-war Senators. McCarthy was not his first choice, nor even his second. But McCarthy told Lowenstein that if no one else would go he would, because "there comes a time when an honorable man simply has to raise the flag." And that was the whole of his reasoning and strategy for the campaign. Many

* Robert Kennedy took his point later, and acknowledged it handsomely. He sent Lowenstein a note reading, "For Al, who knew the lesson of Emerson and taught it to the rest of us . . . that if a single man plant himself on his convictions and there abide, the huge world will come round to him."

THOUGH HARDLY anyone guessed it in January, 1968 was to be Eugene McCarthy's year. While practically the whole Establishment tried to keep him from dominating it, he did so anyway. Afterward he would call it "the hard year."* That year of disaster was indeed hard for most Americans, but especially for Senator McCarthy who ran such a race and bore such burdens as no man in recent memory had. He made it look easy, and, wanting no sympathy, got none. Yet from the first he was subject to strains that few politicians, hardened as they were to the high-risk game, could long have endured.

It began the previous November when he proposed to campaign against President Johnson in selected primaries. Those who did not sneer, laughed. Everyone knew you couldn't deny renomination to an incumbent President. The last time it had been seriously attempted was in 1912 when Theodore Roosevelt nearly wrecked the GOP. And TR had been an immensely popular man. Who was Gene McCarthy to dare what greater men (Robert Kennedy, for example) feared to try? He was witty, a good speaker, and popular in his native Minnesota. But what were these small assets when set against the presidential power? As it turned out, quite a lot. McCarthy did not have a national constituency like Robert Kennedy, or even Hubert Humphrey. He was not influential in the Senate, being outside the club which ran it. In fact, he had probably enjoyed more weight earlier as a House member when he organized the liberal Democratic caucus that became known as McCar-

* That would have been the title of his book, had his publishers not perversely insisted on calling it *The Year of the People*.

pressures had been working on him—his daughter Mary, an eloquent and forceful college student, his own doubts, and an arrogant appearance before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee by Nicholas Katzenbach, the Under Secretary of State. But there were more reasons for staying out, not least of which was that he might look foolish. Still, honor could be satisfied in no other way, so he ran. As he indicated, however, he did not mean to run flat out in the Kennedy way. He would “raise the flag” and see what happened. If the anti-war sentiment was there waiting to be mobilized, as he suspected, he would not need to beat on every door in the country to rouse it. If it wasn't there, no amount of campaigning by him would create it. Then too, if things worked out the campaign would be a long one, and he didn't mean to burn himself out as Nixon had in 1960. In any case, whirlwind campaigns were not his style. As he puts it in his best-known poem, “Are You Running with Me, Jesus?”, which begins with a short list of famous jockers including Senator Proxmire:

I'm not matching my stride
With Billy Graham's by the Clyde.
I'm not going for distance
With the Senator's persistence.
I'm not trying to win a race
Even at George Romney's pace.
I'm an existential runner,
Indifferent to space.
I'm running here in place.

That was how the legendary New Hampshire campaign began. Senator McCarthy seemed merely to be strolling around the state, aided only by Robert Lowell and Paul Newman. Lowell, whose talents as a public speaker were considerably inferior to his poetic gifts, was there mainly to refresh the candidate. Newman, an articulate, politically knowledgeable man in addition to being one of the country's most popular male movie stars, was more formidable. Still, the professionals reasoned, one swan does not a summer make. Johnson men predicted that McCarthy would be lucky to get 5 per cent of the vote (a figure which they revised upward at regular intervals thereafter). Most agreed that McCarthy's vanity, and his old grudge against Johnson for keeping him on the vice-presidential string so long in 1964, had led him into folly. The general amusement was not shared by Senator Kennedy. At first McCarthy had hinted that his campaign was designed only to make Kennedy declare himself. It soon appeared Kennedy would not, and McCarthy started running in earnest. Kennedy naturally resented this. It was bad enough that he had suppressed his own desires and stayed out. But it was gall and wormwood to see McCarthy doing what he ought to have done. On

the very day that Tet, the lunar new year festival, began in Vietnam, Kennedy told reporters at the National Press Club that McCarthy's campaign “so far has been very helpful to President Johnson.” He knew better, though most people still did not. Allard K. Lowenstein had already committed the First People's Volunteer Brigade to battle. All over New England the students were rallying to McCarthy's standard. They poured into New Hampshire and by election day hardly a registered Democrat had escaped their attentions. Working with them were indigent liberals who meant to displace the Johnson men who controlled the New Hampshire Democratic party. Richard Goodwin shared their spirit. When he joined McCarthy's staff he turned to another speech-writer and said, “With these two typewriters we're going to overthrow the government.” Even before Tet the basic pattern was established. McCarthy made the soft sell while the students sold him harder. Insurgent liberal Democrats infiltrated the party structure. There were few precedents for this quiet revolution. Little wonder that the press, and hence the nation, was slow to grasp what was happening in New Hampshire.

Then came the Tet offensive. Tet had a mixed effect on the McCarthy campaign. On the one hand, it made his candidacy seem real for the first time (to realists), and the money started coming in. On the other, it convinced Robert Kennedy that he had to run. He was wobbling even before it. His instincts, his wife, his staff kept pressing him. Just before New Hampshire Jesse Unruh, Speaker of the California House and one of the few state legislators with a national reputation, asked him to run. This assured Kennedy of organization support in a key state. He was further upset when President Johnson blandly disregarded the Kerner report. Then too, it was obvious that the young, a vital part of his constituency, were being lost, perhaps for good, while he sat on the fence. Tet pushed him off it. It is still unclear why he waited until after New Hampshire to say so. Even just before it, there was a dim chance that the support coalescing around McCarthy might yet be diverted to him. But by declaring after the New Hampshire primary he seemed an opportunist who had let McCarthy take the risks so he could skim off the profit, or, in Murray Kempton's bitter analogy, like a scavenger come down from the hills after a battle to shoot the wounded. Worse still, he leaked his intentions early, before, as one McCarthy student said contemptuously, enough money had come in to pay their bills. Hence his announcement was both too late and too early. He compounded his error with a further dash of Camelot hokum. Though proven wrong, the Camelotians still influenced him and he let Theodore Sorensen write this phrase into his declaration of candidacy: “At stake is not simply the leadership of our party and even our country, it is our right to the moral

leadership of this planet." To McCarthyists, and even to his own staff, this was just the sort of thinking that had gotten America into Vietnam to begin with.

But those, like Kennedy himself perhaps, who thought McCarthy would now give up his vain efforts and rally behind the only "serious" anti-administration candidate were quite wrong. McCarthy had done fabulously well in New Hampshire. He not only received 42.2 per cent of the Democratic votes, but 5,511 Republican ones as well. He got only 410 fewer votes than the President. The campaign, which had seemed so amateurish at the time, had been very cleverly handled. His low-key, issue-oriented approach was exactly right for New Hampshire. His students had also appealed to the most thoughtful voters. At the same time New Hampshire liberals were so well organized that while Johnson got more votes, McCarthy got most of the national convention delegates. And they took over the state party organization. The same things were happening in Wisconsin and elsewhere. His followers had worked out a successful strategy, and in doing so obliged McCarthy to go all the way. Almost no one defected to Kennedy, though he made great efforts to win back the students particularly. Later he ruefully observed that he had the B and B—students, while McCarthy had the A students. This was about right. The best students went to McCarthy and stayed with him. Those who followed Kennedy were as much fans as political activists.

Once Kennedy started bombing around the country the differences between the two men became more apparent. Kennedy descended on college campuses and their hot receptions turned him on. He was more volatile than John Kennedy had been, and audience feedback pushed him to the edge of demagoguery at times. He seemed to think President Johnson responsible for every national ill down to and including drug addiction. He said the administration was "calling upon the darker impulses of the American spirit." Reporters took him to task for this, and he was more careful later. But his whole strategy hinged on exploiting his magnetism and glamour, and made certain excesses inevitable. His aides organized vast crowds, whose excitement often threatened people's safety, children especially. He emerged from these ordeals with torn clothes and bleeding hands. After Martin Luther King's death and President Johnson's withdrawal, Kennedy calmed down a lot. But the frenzy was always there in the audience, as it had to be if he was to win.

McCarthy never changed. Tranquil to a fault, he just kept running there in place, though in the end he campaigned longer and harder than anyone else. Wisconsin was like New Hampshire, only more so, the campaign even more self-supporting. Some outside students came in, though they were not really needed. The state's own colleges, led by

the great campus of the University of Wisconsin at Madison, were equal to the task. Wisconsin was heir to a tradition of progressive politics that found modern expression in the Democratic party. Both U.S. Senators from Wisconsin were liberal Democrats, and though Johnson men controlled the party apparatus, McCarthyists were infiltrating it. Nationally the President's popularity was at its lowest point since he assumed office. Only about 35 per cent of those polled supported his policies. Kennedy wasn't on the ticket in Wisconsin, so the anti-administration vote would not be split. Local polls showed that Johnson was going to be beaten badly.

Before that could happen the President spoke to the nation and, to general amazement, announced that he would not be a candidate for re-election. It was the most startling declaration of noncandidacy in American political history. Johnson didn't want his search for peace hampered by politics, he said. And he thought his renunciation would have a unifying effect. He also limited the air war against North Vietnam.

McCarthy won big in Wisconsin as expected, though perhaps not so big as he might have if Johnson had not withdrawn. Then he went on to Indiana and the first direct confrontation with Kennedy. It was not the ground either would have chosen if he could have helped it. The Klan had once run Indiana, and it was still chauvinistic and provincial. As a celebrity, Kennedy had the best chance there. The suburbs, where McCarthy was most popular, were not very important in Indiana, and so he had the worst prospects. Afterward he was to say, "They kept talking about the poet out there. I asked if they were talking about Shakespeare, or even my friend Robert Lowell. But it was James Whitcomb Riley. You could hardly expect to win under these conditions." The ground between them was occupied by Governor Branigin, the Democratic incumbent who originally ran as a stand-in for President Johnson. He had a well-disciplined but unenthusiastic party machine backing up a naturally hokey political style. They finished in just that order with Kennedy getting 43 per cent of the vote, Branigin 31, and McCarthy 27. The press corps following Kennedy wrote a good-natured parody about him called "The Ruthless Cannonball" that summed things up in one verse:

He has the Poles in Gary
The Blacks will fill his hall
There are no ethnic problems on the Ruthless Cannonball.

Just to make certain, the Kennedys spent a great deal of money. And Robert took a somewhat lower road than before, citing his record as Attorney General to prove his soundness on the law-and-order question (a euphemism throughout the year for repressing blacks). As the black

vote was solid for him already, he could afford to flirt with bigotry a little. On the other hand, while playing up to Hoosier chauvinism he also spoke plainly to hostile medical students of their profession's failings. And he gave the best impromptu speech of his life to a black audience in Indianapolis the night Martin Luther King was murdered. In a simple, moving way he tried both to comfort and advise them. He too had had a brother killed, by a white man, he reminded his stricken auditors. But great sorrow ought to promote rededication, not violence or racial hatred. And he ended by quoting from Aeschylus on tragedy's effects. No doubt few listeners knew who the Greek poet was, or grasped exactly the burden of Kennedy's remarks. But it was marvelously winning, nonetheless, especially for being so direct and unaffected. A part of it was shown on television, and one could see why good men loved him so.

The most important thing about the Indiana campaign was not its outcome but what it showed the national prospects to be. Kennedy was still locked into a black-ethnic-teenie-bopper pattern. They made him look good in certain primaries, but they were too few to win a national election with. A detailed Gallup poll released on April 28 was particularly revealing. Among voters under thirty, Kennedy was favored over Humphrey 41 per cent to 16 per cent. But McCarthy was not terribly far behind as 32 per cent of them liked him best. McCarthy was ahead among voters aged thirty to forty with 35 per cent favoring him, 27 per cent liking Kennedy, and 23 per cent supporting Humphrey. He also was favored by voters over fifty, getting 32 per cent of them to Humphrey's 29 per cent and Kennedy's 25 per cent. Kennedy was ahead among grade-school graduates, 36 per cent of them preferred Kennedy while 23 per cent liked McCarthy. But among college graduates the imbalance was much greater. They favored McCarthy over Kennedy by a margin of 26 per cent. Kennedy was ahead with Catholic voters—36 per cent to 29 per cent—but led only slightly among trade-union families, 31 per cent to 29 per cent (Humphrey had 27 per cent). Even more strikingly, Kennedy had made no inroads at all into the peace vote. People who supported the war would give McCarthy only 26 per cent of their votes, while among those opposed 41 per cent would go for him. Kennedy's support among both groups was exactly the same—28 per cent. Of the major Democratic candidates, McCarthy was clearly ahead in the country at large. College graduates and anti-war voters were the core of his strength, but McCarthy was also popular among older voters, not terribly behind Kennedy with the younger ones, and nearly even with him among trade-union families. He also appealed to Republicans and even, oddly enough, to followers of George Wallace who admired

him for bucking the Establishment. Kennedy's problem was to create a popular base sufficiently broad to impress Democratic regulars. McCarthy's was to get beyond the Democratic primaries, where the black-ethnic axis hurt him, into the national arena where his strength lay. Both, of course, suffered from Humphrey's appeal to the party organization that would control the convention. In the spring that was a less pressing matter, though finally it would be crucial.

The next few primaries were indecisive. Kennedy won handily in Nebraska, partly because of dissatisfaction with the administration's farm policy. McCarthy's old ties with Hubert Humphrey, and especially Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman, hurt him. And while there weren't many blacks in Nebraska, neither were there many suburbs. Kennedy glamour had, in consequence, an especially clear field. Oregon was another story. Depressed Kennedy supporters condemned the state for being one vast suburb. What they meant was that Oregonians were mainly native-born whites in comfortable circumstances. They were independent. The anti-war spirit was especially strong among them. The state was tailor-made for McCarthy's low-key, sardonic approach. His nonpartisan status helped him too. While Kennedy was forced to challenge regular Democrats in 1968, Camelot had been based on them. This old association clung to Kennedy even while the regulars were going over to Humphrey in a body. In Oregon McCarthy had the better organization. Under these circumstances the effort to make Kennedy seem the country's only possible savior fell flat. "Bobby threatened to hold his breath unless the people of Oregon voted for him" was how McCarthy described it. Then too, McCarthy simply hit harder. He was especially pointed when asking if Kennedy, whose whole political career was based on the very men responsible for the Vietnam War, was exactly the right man to end it.

In consequence, Oregon was where the Kennedy family lost its first election. Losing a primary does not mean much as a rule. McCarthy had lost three already with few ill effects. But Kennedy was not an ordinary politician. Charisma was the largest part of his appeal, and as the English authors of *An American Melodrama*, the best account of the 1968 election, noted, charisma is peculiarly evanescent. It means more than just attractiveness or popularity. To have it is to be clothed with a special grace as hero, prophet, or savior. It is an extraordinary quality evoked by extraordinary circumstances. But being unstable it must be continually replenished with fresh victories. And it does not often survive defeat. The magic cloak once torn dissolves quickly. Oregon diminished Kennedy and made victory in California essential. California was anything but a typical state. Yet it was huge, hence vital, and more than

any other it represented the future. Despite its anachronisms—John Birchers, aging Midwesterners, ex-Oakies—this was where the new America was being shaped. Kennedy had to win it.

McCarthy's situation was more complex. If he won in California, as he very well might, Kennedy would probably drop out and many of his delegates would go to Humphrey, who would then certainly be nominated. But if McCarthy lost badly his funds would dry up and, probably, his candidacy also. The best thing that could happen, then, would be for him to lose by a hair. This would keep him alive until Chicago where, if Humphrey and Kennedy deadlocked, he might be chosen out of desperation. The President hated Kennedy most, and might support McCarthy if he were the only alternative. This was not a terribly likely prospect, but it was the best one McCarthy's advisers could foresee. As there was no way of arranging to lose narrowly, however, they had to play to win. Which was just as well as McCarthy's followers intended to win and nearly did. McCarthy summoned them to battle in his usual stirring way. "My strategy is to walk through the Red Sea dry-shod. Any of you who want to follow me before the waters close in are welcome to do so." All the same, McCarthy had an excellent organization in California. His people had gotten him the top line on the ballot by ingenious means. In a single night, petition-signing parties were held all over the state that produced more than enough signatures to get him registered first. Students provided him with virtually unlimited manpower. And, as his daughter Mary put it, they were more effective than Kennedy's. "They have the jumpers and squealers—we have the thinkers and doers." Kennedy depended heavily on paid professionals. McCarthy had 150 local headquarters established and manned by local volunteers. And, for once, McCarthy may have had the edge in celebrities. Hollywood turned out a glittering contingent on his behalf, headed by Paul Newman who went all the way with McCarthy from New Hampshire to Chicago. And though almost no orthodox Democratic politicians supported McCarthy, he had the California Democratic Council, the largest liberal Democratic citizens' group in the country, behind him.

To combat these obstacles Kennedy pulled out all the stops. The usual shower of gold fell on California. All the family's political debts were called in. One of the most genuine and attractive things about Robert Kennedy was his passion for obscure minorities. If there were any Indians in the country he had not spoken to, it was only by accident. Yet the Indian vote was insignificant. The Mexican-American vote was also small, but Kennedy was a tireless friend of the "Chicanos" (as brown militants were calling themselves). He had been especially helpful to Cesar Chavez and the striking grape-pickers. But Chavez was also indebted to the AFL-CIO for steady financial support, and the unions

supported Humphrey. Chavez wanted to stay neutral. Kennedy, rightly as it turned out, felt his endorsement was essential and made Chavez back him. Mainly, though, Kennedy relied on the *blitzkrieg*. Advance men lined up big crowds, and he would then drive through them for hours at a stretch amidst scenes of frightful enthusiasm. The old charisma was still working but, as polls showed, it was not enough. McCarthy was running a very skillful television campaign. Leaving the canvassing to his volunteers, he concentrated on getting interviewed. McCarthy looked good on TV, where his naturally quiet, reflective manner came through best. Thus his biggest handicap, the inability to inspire vast ovations, became an asset. The evening news would show a typical Kennedy mob scene set against a thoughtful McCarthy interview. Kennedy's men tried to get interviews for their candidate with little luck: the crowds were what was most newsworthy about him. So they decided, in desperation, to accept McCarthy's old challenge to debate.

McCarthy had used Kennedy's refusal to debate him successfully in Oregon, and it was working for him again in California. Kennedy's men had followed the maxim, proven out in the famous TV debates of 1960, that such exposure helps the lesser-known candidate. They didn't wish to use Kennedy's great reputation to advance McCarthy's. But by California the differences between them had narrowed to the point where Kennedy's charisma was being offset by McCarthy's mature, experienced image on television. When it came, the debate was a considerable disappointment. McCarthy was unprepared, and no one could see why he'd wanted it in the first place. Kennedy was armed to the teeth with materials demonstrating experience and grasp of the issues. It tended toward formlessness. There was little real difference between the candidates except that McCarthy was usually on the defensive. Kennedy accomplished this by dubious means. He got McCarthy to admit that some of his advertising had been withdrawn for being unfair to Kennedy. But when McCarthy tried to point out that some of Kennedy's ads were even more unfair, Kennedy blandly replied that he didn't know what McCarthy was talking about—which was plainly false.

Kennedy's worst ploy involved the racial question. This was Kennedy's special province, and he resented McCarthy for taking issue with him over it. McCarthy was always being criticized for not going into the ghettos more. He did visit some, but the point of his campaign was to escape the old politics based on racial, class, and ethnic appeals. This did not mean that McCarthy didn't care about the Negro question, nor that he had no ideas about it. Quite the contrary. On May 28 in Davis, McCarthy spelled out his position on the ghetto more clearly than ever. Kennedy's approach, epitomized by his Bedford-Stuyvesant project of self-help plus white capital, was tacitly to accept segregation while try-

ing to make poverty areas more livable. "Gilding the ghetto," his critics called it. This was where McCarthy disagreed. His program involved better mass-transit systems so that inner-city people could get out to the suburbs where the jobs were. He wanted plenty of public housing, some of it outside the center city, to bring the worker and the job together but also because he still believed in integration as the ultimate goal for America. And he didn't think black capitalism and involving private enterprise in ghetto affairs would help much, Bedford-Stuyvesant notwithstanding.*

There was room for disagreement among honorable men on the ghetto question, as over integration itself. But Kennedy took a queer way to express his doubts. He accused McCarthy of being at once insensitive to black needs and a danger to white suburbanites. "I mean, when you say you are going to take ten thousand black people into Orange County . . ." he began, when in fact McCarthy had never proposed any such thing. Nor would any sane man knowing how hostile that stronghold of the John Birch Society would be to black immigrants. It was, of course, just this kind of thing that had given Kennedy his reputation for ruthlessness. It did seem to work though. In California Kennedy cut into the undecided vote which usually went to McCarthy. His aides thought the debate responsible. But his margin of victory was provided by the blacks, who in some areas broke precedent by voting in greater proportions than whites. The Mexican-Americans voted for him practically to a man. So he won, to his great relief, and perhaps to McCarthy's also, for the margin between them, 4-5 per cent of the total vote, was just about right to give McCarthy the near win his candidacy needed most. Then the assassin's bullet struck down Kennedy and the race was over for both of them.

It was assumed at the time that Kennedy would have gone on to capture the New York delegation. But McCarthy's followers, who actually took it, might well have done so anyway. The New York regulars disliked Kennedy more than McCarthy. He had been, as was always said, a "carpetbagger" to start with, winning election to the Senate from New York without really living there. The professionals bowed to his power at the polls, but they never liked it. And they naturally favored Humphrey for President. McCarthy had fine organizers in New York, whose complex primary system was well adapted to their talents. They boned up on the rules and fielded more delegate slates than any of the other factions. Even children helped out. People would talk to the Junior Students for McCarthy who wouldn't speak to any normal canvasser, and

* Later events showed he was right on that count. After Kennedy's death, support for his Bedford-Stuyvesant project declined. It was as much a consequence of his personal reputation as the needs of the ghetto. Even if it had worked, the chances of its being imitated on the necessary scale were slight.

their opening line, "Do you believe in death?" was a grabber. The McCarthyists won 63 out of 123 delegate seats (with 30 going to the late Senator), and probably would have done almost as well had Kennedy lived. But of course it made no difference. With Kennedy gone there was no chance of the convention stalemate that was McCarthy's only hope.

As all the world knows, Robert Kennedy was shot down in a hotel kitchen minutes after giving his conciliatory victory statement in Los Angeles.* What followed were the by now traditional post-assassination events. President Johnson sent an official jet to fly the body to New York where hundreds of distinguished people stood vigil by the bier. The President and other great men and women came to the funeral mass. It was led by Richard Cardinal Cushing, who had done the same for President Kennedy, with the Pope's own representative Angelo Cardinal Dell'Acqua attending. Leonard Bernstein conducted. Senator Edward Kennedy read a moving eulogy asking that his brother be remembered "as a good and decent man who saw wrong and tried to right it, saw suffering and tried to heal it, saw war and tried to stop it." Andy Williams, a popular singer and family friend, sang the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." Afterward came the long train ride down the Penn Central's main line to Washington. Huge crowds lined the way. Two people were killed before all traffic was halted along the line. It took eight hours to make the 226-mile trip. The family's agony, made all the worse by these deaths, can scarcely be imagined. There were a thousand people—friends, relatives, reporters—aboard the train, drinking, sweating (most coaches were not air-conditioned that hot June day), and despairing.

Reporters especially gave way to cynicism. To the English authors of *An American Melodrama*, "The afflicted train limping through urban America became a moving focus of absurd morbidity, thoroughly mixed with banality by the communications media and disseminated throughout America, to no beneficial result. Aboard the train, those who could not contrive the resource of black humor vied with each other in maudlin exaggerations about the national predicament." Which only went to show how difficult it is for foreigners to gauge another people's emotions. *An American Melodrama* was the best book about the 1968 elections, partly because the authors' cold foreign eyes pene-

* The man charged with his murder, Sirhan B. Sirhan, was a Palestinian refugee with no clear motive, unlike previous assassins. If one was pro-Cuban the death of John F. Kennedy had some purpose. Racists did not have to explain why Martin Luther King died. But Robert Kennedy's murder was pointless, seemingly the consequence of a pathetically deranged mind (though it was thought initially that Sirhan acted against Kennedy's pro-Israeli statements). Dr. Martin M. Schorr who examined Sirhan said, "By killing Mr. Kennedy, Sirhan B. Sirhan kills his father and takes his father's place as the heir to his mother." His act was much admired by Arabs all the same.

trated the defensive fictions and sentiments that Americans surround themselves with. But it was precisely their detachment that kept the English newsmen from understanding what it was like to live through that seemingly endless chain of assassinations in the sixties, or to grasp how shocking it was to have this greatest of all modern electoral dramas end so tragically. Nor could they realize how much Robert Kennedy was liked, in the center and on the left, even by those who did not care for his politics. (Tom Hayden, a founding father of SDS, wept at the funeral.) And finally, no one living through purgatory on the train could judge its effect on television.

For viewers with any degree of sympathy it was terribly affecting. To sit before the flickering screen for hours, days perhaps, on end, to see the stately movement of events interspersed with clips of the living Robert Kennedy, was to experience again the murder and burial of John F. Kennedy. It was all the worse the second time around, and worse still for happening to a man who was in so many respects more vital and passionate than the late President. Thus to *déjà vu* and remembered sorrow was added a special sense of loss. It made people despair for the future of a country whose best men were being murdered, or sent to Vietnam to kill and be killed senselessly, or jailed, or driven into exile. An *American Melodrama* mocks, and properly so in a way, the excessively gloomy editorializing that followed Robert Kennedy's assassination. Though desperate enough, things were not quite so bad as James Reston and his fellow Jeremiahs claimed. It was easy for the English to recognize that, not so easy for a people who had seen their hopes for America destroyed by war, racial strife, political division, and repeated assassinations. As the funeral train wound its slow way down the Eastern seaboard, it carried to the grave not just the dream of another Camelot and the ambitions of Kennedy loyalists but the whole renewal of American political life that had begun in snowy New Hampshire such a short time before.

Liberal Americans had good reason to weep then, and millions did. The train, so ghastly to be on, was a perfect symbol for everything that had just ended in Los Angeles. The people who lined the tracks, waving, and sometimes in their embarrassment cheering feebly, mourned not just the man but what in that moment he symbolized. Those in the train could not see their faces, as TV viewers did. They could not hear the thousands softly singing the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" in Baltimore long before the train came by, their voices rising and falling in the silent air. And they could not have been moved as other Americans were to see the dark train sliding through the station, with the crowds singing and Senator Edward Kennedy, sitting on the rear platform as he did most of the journey, often in shirtsleeves with his arms around a

child, raising a weary hand to them. And the funeral party was surely too exhausted on the gentle night when Robert Kennedy was laid to rest in Arlington cemetery, next to his brother John, to grasp the somber beauty of that moment. Eyes thought to be drained of tears wept again.



How will history judge Robert Kennedy? It is still too soon to say, no doubt. But to hazard a guess, probably his foremost quality will seem to have been his capacity for growth. He began public life as a young enthusiast on Senator Joe McCarthy's subcommittee staff. In those days he appeared to possess little more than the terrible ambition Joseph Kennedy gave all his sons, together with an unbecoming desire to persecute suspected communists. Later he attacked union racketeers with the same lack of scruple. He already had a reputation for ruthlessness when he became Attorney General, and though able, was not considered particularly literate or intelligent. While he continued to show little interest in civil liberties (allowing the FBI to tap Martin Luther King's phone, for example), he developed a great interest in civil rights and to most people's surprise became an outstanding Attorney General. After President Kennedy's assassination his character mellowed and deepened. His sympathy for distressed minorities, already strong, became stronger still. He struggled with the great questions of life and death, read Aeschylus and Camus, and exchanged his instrumental optimism for a more stoic philosophy. He wished to do good more than ever, yet he was less sanguine about its possibilities. Because to get a little done you must dare a lot, he became less conservative politically. "I can't be sitting around here calculating whether something I do is going to hurt my political situation in 1972," he once remarked. "Who knows whether I'm going to be alive in 1972?" This was not morbidity but realism. His favorite poem was Alan Seeger's "I Have a Rendezvous with Death," in which the poet romantically goes off to war expecting to die but thinking it worthwhile anyway.

Kennedy became, if anything, more witty in his later years. At Waterloo, Nebraska, in his last campaign a high school reporter showed him the result of a student poll and asked if he had any comment. "RFK: Yes. Tell those who voted for me, thank you. Q: What about those who voted against you? RFK: Tell them I'll get them. (Laughter from the press corps.)" Once he spoke across the street from a movie marquee advertising "The Happiest Millionaire." He pointed to it and said, "Make that come true on election day." Robert Kennedy was more moody, intuitive, impulsive, and emotional than President Kennedy had been. He was more Boston, more Catholic, and, in the Irish way, more puritanical

too. All this made for a complex, intriguing, attractive personality. Everyone who knew him agreed that the more you saw of him the more you liked him. Even the press corps, long since inoculated against personal and political enthusiasms, were drawn to him, so much so that the more honest struggled constantly to preserve some measure of detachment, usually with diminishing success. One cannot think of another politician for whom the press would have composed an affectionate parody like "The Ruthless Cannonball."

It was just because of these qualities that Robert Kennedy's death was such a loss. He was always in the process of becoming. No one will ever know what kind of man he might ultimately have been. And it was doubly tragic because his last race, for all its gallantry, was founded on a betrayal of his best instincts. If he had run for President in McCarthy's stead, or if he had declared before New Hampshire, he would have scored a moral triumph such as few could remember. A man who had more to lose than any other major politician would have risked everything in one magnificent gesture. But the fatal Kennedy ambivalence between morality and reality did him in. Like most serious politicians the Kennedys believed that winning came first. But, again like most politicians, they found that to win one must take out mortgages with bosses, interests, and factions. Winning that way left little room for the causes one had presumably gained office to advance. This is the classic dilemma of democratic political leaders, but it was especially acute in the case of men who, like the Kennedys, had great pretensions. Robert Kennedy wanted to walk hand in hand with Mayor Daley and Martin Luther King. The thing could not be done, and by the time he realized that, and made the proper decision, it was too late. All he did was split the anti-war movement and assure the nomination of Hubert Humphrey, the President's own deputy. As a historic figure, then, Robert Kennedy is likely to be best remembered for what he might have been. If he had been less than what he was, history would focus on his brilliant record as Attorney General, and his prudent counsel during the Cuban missile crisis. But he aimed so high that he must be judged for what he meant to do and, through error and tragic accident, failed at. On the other hand, he will also be remembered as an extraordinary human being who, though hated by some, was perhaps more deeply loved by his countrymen than any man of his time. That too must be entered into the final account, and it is no small thing. With his death something precious disappeared from public life.

What of Eugene McCarthy? Kennedy's assassination marked the real end of his "magical mystery tour," or "children's crusade," or whatever one chose to call it. He would go on to Chicago to play out his personal drama, but it was largely over by then. Both the run and the man are

extraordinarily difficult to assess. More nonsense, much of it vicious, was written about McCarthy in 1968 than about any man in recent years. The *New Republic* summed it up nicely afterward in an editorial called "Showing You Care." A common criticism of McCarthy's candidacy by liberals was that he didn't care about the job enough to make a "strong" President. The *New Republic* called this the "passion-for-office" test of presidential fitness, the theory being, apparently, that if the candidate didn't want the office bad enough to lie, cheat, and steal, he wasn't qualified to have it. This was a curious enough position in itself, but more so given the fact that Lyndon Johnson was an especially strong President—hence the reaction against him. Even Senator George McGovern, an unusually sensible politician, offered his potential strength as the chief virtue of his belated candidacy.

The *New Republic* said of McCarthy's followers: "The most stunning argument in favor of their man's seriousness of purpose—that he had entered the lists when all others had declined to do so—was turned against him, in another of the remarkable feats by which wine is transformed into water in politics: 'Don't call it courage, call it foolishness.' Everyone knew that it was impossible to tumble an incumbent President from within his own party, let alone to stop a war. Thus the man who tried to do so, far from offering testimony to his faith in the democratic process, proved simply that he did not really care enough to be President. The only conclusion to draw was that McCarthy found some special and perhaps perverted pleasure in helling around New Hampshire in the winter with only a crowd of newly shorn college students for company—or had 'nothing to lose.'" Nothing to lose except face, almost the most important of all commodities for a professional politician. Then again, when asked by a reporter if he would make a good President, McCarthy replied that he thought he would be adequate. This showed his frivolity. Another count against him was that he did not "build bridges," that is to say, he didn't appeal to people like Mayor Daley who would not normally support him. This again showed his want of seriousness. Every serious politician sells out to a degree, it was understood, the whole trick was to sell at the best possible price.

McCarthy's failure to captivate the press was also cited. "His inability or refusal to be 'visibly moved' was legendary. There is no instance on record of his crying in public. He generally appeared more impatient than gratified when his speeches were interrupted by applause." This showed his lack of compassion. But what really hurt him with newsmen, hardly notable for compassion themselves, "was his refusal to respond in kind to ersatz seriousness and spurious conscientiousness." Reporters expect politicians to be hypocrites, and resent it when they aren't. Then too, during a campaign most newsmen are expected to turn out

a story every day, and friendly politicians cooperate by staging non-events or pseudo-interviews to meet this need. Presumably both sides benefit from these fraudulent encounters. The politician gets more free publicity. The reporter satisfies his editors. By failing to conform, McCarthy showed again his self-destructive political tendencies, while injuring, or so they must have thought, the reporters' careers. They paid him back by emphasizing his arrogance and insensitivity, and the amateurish character of his campaign.

By and large, both the press and the Kennedy Democrats were victims of their prejudice. McCarthy was an exceptionally daring politician. He was one of the first to openly attack Joe McCarthy when the Wisconsin Senator was thought to be both invulnerable and capable of wrecking any enemy. And he was, of course, first to challenge the presidential power over Vietnam. He was also among the early critics of the CIA, the only important politician to urge the firing of General Lewis Hershey (Selective Service director) and J. Edgar Hoover. No Kennedy could say as much. But McCarthy was also a shrewd politician. It was the unorthodoxy of his campaign that kept his enemies from seeing that McCarthy understood early on that Johnson was vulnerable, which was why he went to New Hampshire. He also understood that the constituency which would rally round him was tired of the old politics with all its humbug. The best students, the well educated, and the independents would work for him to the degree that he contrasted to other Democratic leaders. They didn't like Johnson's combination of patriotic corn and arm-twisting. Yet they also disliked Kennedy's pitch to blacks and ethnics, his wooing of the established pols, and the deliberate charisma which his advertising exploited.

It was precisely because McCarthy avoided all these pitfalls that he was admired. What he proved was that plain speaking, nerve, and a low profile appealed to a constituency that no one believed existed, or that if it did exist was unimportant. He also picked up votes from alienated conservatives who admired him not so much for his specific policies as for his independence. McCarthy never made the slightest effort to win votes from George Wallace. He got some anyway. And, as we saw earlier, though his base was in the suburbs he had strong support among trade-union families and the very young. Since he got it without pandering to any interest group, McCarthy was in a position to innovate, and he did. As David Halberstam, who really liked Kennedy best, observed, McCarthy was charting a course for the future while most politicians were still hung up on the past—Kennedy included. Though in many respects a conservative, which was why he ran in the first place—to sustain confidence in the system among the young and alienated—McCarthy's campaign was the most radical of all. His racial proposals

aimed at integration when liberals like Kennedy were falling back on separatism. His foreign policy was not isolationist, as Dean Rusk seemed to think, but it did involve a drastic reordering of international affairs. Though he was often sharp with newsmen, he understood the uses of television better than almost any politician. However badly the newspapers treated him, McCarthy knew that television counted most, and he came across beautifully on it. The understatement and wry humor that were his stock in trade were not really reportable. His best remarks had a way of being mangled by the press.

TV showed him as he was: witty ("They're [Republicans] somewhat like the lowest forms of plant and animal life. Even at their highest point of vitality there is not much life in them; on the other hand, they don't die"), learned ("One of the things that I object to about the Kennedys is that they are trying to turn the presidency into the Wars of the Roses"), and fast on his feet. He had a marvelous technique with hecklers. Once in California he trapped them as follows: "They say I'm a stalking horse for Kennedy. [YEAH.] And they say I'm a Judas goat for Johnson. [YEAH.] Awful hard to be both." Nationally the McCarthy organization was faction-ridden. His Senate staff distrusted the newcomers. There were countless rivalries and personality clashes. McCarthy was frequently criticized for this. But as Jay Sykes, his manager in Wisconsin, pointed out later, there was a method even here. While McCarthy ignored upper-echelon factionalism, he was attentive to the local organizations. He believed, and rightly as it turned out, that in his campaign it was the grass roots that counted. He once disposed of questions about why a staff member had resigned by saying that the loss was trivial, nothing like the damage he would have sustained had his driver quit. This was unbearably flippant from the newsmen's viewpoint, but it summed up his campaign. The important thing was that he cast his bread upon as much water as he could. Thanks to his army of volunteers, the rest would take care of itself. And so, to a surprising degree, it did.

Both the man and his campaign were best captured by Hans Morgenthau in, of all places, the *New York Review of Books*. After talking at length with Senator McCarthy, Morgenthau reported that the private man and the public man were identical. Unlike the usual campaign in which it was understood that what followed would be quite different, McCarthy's candidacy embodied his views on how policy should be conducted. Morgenthau wrote that McCarthy had three precise ideas about what he could do as President. "He can restore a philosophy of government and of the American purpose which suits the genius of the American people. By doing this, he can move large masses of Americans and, more particularly, of the younger generation back into active participation in the democratic processes. Finally, he presents clear-cut al-

ternatives to the policies of the present administration as well of his competitors, especially in the field of foreign policy." McCarthy, he noted, had an "instrumental and restrictive conception of presidential power."

His foreign policy was "common sense restored to its rightful place." He saw the American mission as not to dominate but to lead. It was more important to set a good example at home than to try and reform the world by force—thus racial justice in America was more desirable than trying to coerce South Africa into changing its ways. NATO was obsolete, but this did not mean that the U.S. should abandon its European presence, which was desirable if only to sustain the Western orientation of Germany. China ought to be recognized, but Taiwan could not be ignored. In Latin America McCarthy understood that revolution was coming and that the role of the U.S. was not to suppress it but to see that basic American interests were preserved. On Vietnam McCarthy had the courage and honesty to realize that the war was lost and that the U.S. had to make the best terms it could—which probably meant a coalition government with the NLF. Morgenthau concluded: "That so many Americans seem willing to put their trust in a man of such qualities, who has come to them without money, without organization, and without prestigious sponsorship, honors them perhaps more than it honors him. Win or lose in August and November, Eugene McCarthy will have this historic achievement to his credit: to have made active and visible qualities of goodness and sanity latent in the American people, to have revealed a face of America that was concealed beneath the distorting mask of its political practices, and to have given us an intimation of what the American people could be like if they had a leader worthy of them."

Kennedy's death and the ruin of McCarthy's fortunes guaranteed that no great changes would take place in 1968, but the election itself was yet to be held. And to have the election it was necessary first to endure the nominating conventions. Of all the trying features of American political life, conventions are easily the worst. Though streamlined a bit for television, they remain long, boring, and incomprehensible for the most part. Endless speeches and roll calls stupefy viewers, while the real convention takes place behind closed doors where the deals are made. The Republican convention in Miami was very traditional. "Nixon Girls" paraded winsomely, balloons rose in the fetid air while Rockefeller fell. His campaign had little chance to begin with. He only launched his last-ditch effort because, for the first time in his career of pursuing the Republican nomination, he had solid Establishment support. Richard

Nixon, having made the most remarkable political comeback in recent history, was comfortably in the lead, George Romney, his main challenger, having disqualified himself by saying that he had been "brain-washed" into supporting the war earlier. Yet many businessmen doubted Nixon could win and, more out of despair than enthusiasm, asked Rockefeller, still perhaps the country's most popular Republican, to tackle him once more. Accordingly, the Rockefeller machine ground out a PR blitz designed to prove that though Nixon had run in the primaries and Rockefeller had not, "Rocky" remained the people's choice. It failed. When he came to the convention, then, Rockefeller's only chance was that a last-minute Reagan boom might divide conservatives, enabling him to slip through.

This was not so forlorn a hope as it seemed later. Nixon was, next to President Johnson, the most distrusted figure in national politics. Conservatives supported him not because of his ideology, for he had none, but because he supported the ticket in 1964. The pros appreciated that too, and even more his great contribution to the GOP comeback in 1966 when the party had picked up seven additional governorships and forty-seven more seats in Congress—almost exactly the number Nixon had predicted. Nixon was going to be nominated because of what he was owed, not for the affection he was held in. Ronald Reagan was the conservatives' new darling. He was personable, good on TV, and quick to exploit student protests, Black Power, welfare measures, and everything else that conservatives despised. And he was more professional, for all his late entry into politics, than Goldwater had been. But the Reagan candidacy flopped, taking Rockefeller with it, thanks mainly to Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina.

Thurmond was a strange figure. A militarist (and reserve general), a segregationist (who had been the Dixiecrat candidate for President in 1948), he was revered in the South for championing war and racism. With most Southern Republicans (the bulk of them, like Thurmond, recent converts), he preferred Reagan. But he was convinced that Reagan would only produce another debacle. So he used his influence to hold the South for Nixon, who, though a weak conservative, was better than none at all. He was immediately rewarded when Nixon, having won on the first ballot, chose Spiro Agnew of Maryland as his Vice-President. Agnew was, in his own words, "stunned." So was the country. He had no visible qualifications to be next in line for the presidency. All most people knew about him was that, having run for governor of Maryland against a racist, he had become one himself. Black votes put Agnew in the statehouse, but when riots erupted in Maryland he blamed them on the Negro leadership and raised the cry for law and order. But his obscurity and backward sentiments were exactly what commended him

to Nixon. Nixon did not want another running mate like Henry Cabot Lodge, who had gone pretty much his own way in 1960. As a political cipher, Agnew could be depended on to take orders. And, as a border-state governor, Agnew was acceptable to the South. This last was vital. Thurmond was owed a favor. More than that, the GOP was flirting with a "Southern strategy." The Democrats were to be displaced as the nation's majority party by a new coalition of businessmen, farmers, and Western and, especially, Southern bigots. Nixon himself defined there was a Southern strategy. And though he appealed to the South, his signals were ambiguous. But in selecting Agnew he sent it a message that no one could mistake.*

Still, it was hard to tell from his convention performance exactly what sort of candidate (or President) Nixon would be. His style was more slick and convincing than before. In his acceptance speech he made the usual appeal for law and order, but also promised to end the war in Vietnam ("honorably," of course). The old mawkishness was still there (he invoked as always his humble origins and Quaker mother). But the speech was more conciliatory than not. Norman Mailer, who covered both conventions, found the new Nixon baffling. "There had never been anyone in American life so resolutely phony as Richard Nixon, nor any one so transcendently successful by such means—small wonder half the electorate had regarded him for years as equal to a disease. But he was less phony now, that was the miracle, he had moved from a position of total ambition and total alienation from his own person (at the time of Checkers, the dog speech) to a place now where he was halfway conciliated with his own self. As he spoke, he kept going in and out of focus, true one instant, phony the next, then quietly correcting the false step." That blurred quality was to be the new Nixon's hallmark. Strom Thurmond might know where Nixon was going, but no one else seemed to, then or later.

* Actually, the Southern strategy was more apparent than real in 1968. Nixon made a few gestures toward the South, but in the main his campaign was straight Madison Avenue. This disappointed Kevin Phillips, a brilliant young Republican strategist who wanted seriously to exploit ethnic hostilities. He believed there were twenty major ethnic groups, and twenty minor ones, ripe for a carefully planned appeal to their worse natures. On this basis a great new coalition could be built. The party did take his advice in one important respect. It concentrated on the border states rather than the Deep South, on the grounds that moderate Democrats were easier to convert. If the border went Republican, the Deep South would have to come along eventually as there would be no place else for bigots to go. It was unlikely, however, that Phillips' complete strategy would ever be implemented. For one thing, it required a bold commitment such as politicians hate to make. They like to cover their bets, Nixon especially. As Milton Viorst pointed out, the Nixon administration was a caretaker government, not a coalition-builder. Even if it wasn't, Viorst argued, Phillips' scheme would not work. "I don't think great coalitions can be built on cynicism."

Hubert Humphrey's nomination was even more inevitable than Nixon's. While Kennedy and McCarthy were storming through the country, Humphrey was quietly lining up delegates. He didn't run in the primaries. The polls showed him way behind McCarthy and Kennedy. He was assured of nomination all the same, especially after Kennedy's death. The hawks were for him as one of their own. Labor backed him as a long-time champion of their interests. The regular civil rights organizations could not turn their backs on one who had led the fight for civil rights at the Democratic convention in 1948. President Johnson seemed to be for him. The professionals owed him for his years of speaking and fund-raising on their behalf. They were terrified of the citizens for McCarthy. In this respect the McCarthy surge was much more threatening than Kennedy's had been. Kennedy was a party man by choice, a rebel only by necessity. His support came from within the party structure, and he never stopped hoping that the big pols like Mayor Daley would come over to him. Had he lost the nomination everyone knew he would have campaigned loyally for the ticket. McCarthy was another matter. He owed the party nothing. No one knew what he would do if denied the nomination. Worse still, his followers were not under orders. He might change his mind, but that didn't guarantee they would. They meant not just to nominate McCarthy but to capture the party. They had already done so in some states (New Hampshire), and obtained a piece of the action in others (New York, Connecticut). Thus while the polls still showed McCarthy to have the best chance of any Democratic candidate in November, nominating him would mean a loss of professional control over the party apparatus. Politicians are in business to win elections, but not at such a cost. If the price of victory was less power in the party, they wouldn't pay it. It was, and they didn't.

Humphrey had once been an insurgent himself, which made his position as the bosses' candidate seem incongruous. But the fit was more comfortable than it appeared. Though he had broken ranks over civil rights in 1948, and been an aggressively independent Senator at first, he had learned early that to get ahead you must get along. He became a Johnson protégé in the Senate, and, without giving much away in principle, joined the club. As a Senator he was able to balance realism and progressivism successfully. But once he became Vice-President that was no longer possible. Vice-Presidents do what they are told. What Humphrey was told to do was sell the war, which he did with his usual gusto. Rhetorical excess was always his problem. He talked too much too often. He got carried away. In 1964 he once enjoined Ohioans to redeem their failure to vote for Kennedy in 1960 by going Democratic in 1964, "so that John Kennedy in heaven will know we won." And he promised a "nuclear reign of terror" if Goldwater was elected. Hum-

phrey's background made it easy for him to justify the war in Vietnam. As a young politician he had helped purge the Minnesota Democratic Farmer Labor party of communists in the 1940's. As a Senator in 1950 he had voted for the Internal Security Act, and later proposed an amendment to that would have made membership in the Communist party punishable by five years in prison. He was a Cold War liberal and red-baiter for most of his career.

So Humphrey's position as the Establishment's candidate was not so strange as it seemed. He had become a good party man since 1948. He would put his arm around Lester Maddox, the segregationist governor of Georgia, if that helped the ticket. Little wonder that the young and pacific despised him. Little wonder too that he failed to understand why. After all, his record on civil rights was impeccable. And he had backed the test-ban treaty in the Senate. Indeed, his liberal enterprises were practically without number. But the long and short of it was that in 1968 he wielded the administration's hatchet. His job was to hold the line for war and party regularity and break the resistance. Given the McCarthyist refusal to accept what was inevitable, this meant a rough convention.

Others were conspiring to make it rougher still. One of these was Mayor Daley himself, a big-time city boss who had survived the last hurrah by allying a wickedly efficient machine with the business establishment. He had insisted on getting the convention for Chicago even though millions of dollars and endless trouble would have been saved by having it in Miami. The networks could have televised two conventions there for hardly more than the price of one. And Miami was far from the maddened anti-war throng. Daley knew trouble was coming. But he thought his big, brutal police force could handle it, and if not, his man in Springfield would call out the National Guard. Just to be safe, though, he managed things so that the networks would find it hard to televise whatever disturbances did take place.

Daley's *lumpen-bourgeois* prejudices were exactly what some trouble-makers counted on to make the convention memorable. Their labors began a month before, when Abbie Hoffman and his friends founded the Youth International party. The difference between the yippies and other leftists, according to Hoffman, was that they were "revolutionary artists. Our concept of revolution is that it's fun." Yippie leaders decided to stage a Festival of Life in Chicago to counterbalance the Democratic convention which would, naturally, be a celebration of death. Meanwhile, the less psychedelic National Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam was planning to demonstrate in Chicago also. The joint yippie-Mobe program was heavily publicized in the underground press. Ed Sanders of the Fugs, a yippie founder, wrote a piece for *The Fifth Estate* of Detroit called "Dope, Peace, Magic, Gods in the Tree-Trunk and Group-Grope."

It explained that the festival meant "poetry readings, mass meditation, flycasting exhibitions, demagogic Yippie political arousal speeches, and rock music and song concerts." An elite force of 230 sexy yippie males would seduce the wives, daughters, and girl friends of convention delegates. Paul Krassner of *The Realist*, the country's oldest underground paper, threatened to put LSD in Chicago's water supply. All these preliminaries were designed to offend Chicago's provincial sensibilities and insure the best possible confrontation.

This was not difficult to arrange. As Norman Mailer pointed out, the slaughterhouse showed the spirit of Chicago. "In any other city they would have technologies to silence the beasts with needles, quarter them with machines, lull them with Muzak, and have stainless steel for doors, aluminum beds to take over the old overhead trolley—animals would be given a shot of vitamin-enrichment before they took the last ride. But in Chicago, they did it straight, they cut the animals right out of their hearts—which is why it was the last of the great American cities, and people had great faces, carnal as blood, greedy, direct, too impatient for hypocrisy, in love with honest plunder. . . . Yes, Chicago was a town where nobody could ever forget how the money was made. It was picked up from floors still slippery with blood."

So that was how it would be in August. The yippies goaded Daley and his minions to rage and madness. Expecting the worst, McCarthy urged his people to stay home. In the event, only about 2,500 yippies came to the convention, but that was more than enough. Dave Dellinger of the Mobe assumed that Daley would play it smart, give the protesters a parade permit, "and let us get swallowed up on the South Side." But Daley didn't want to outmaneuver the demonstrators; that was not Chicago's way. He meant to smash them to bloody bits. Fury and prejudice were two reasons for the violence to follow. But another was the peculiar psychology seeping into police work. As big-city police became more militarized, they acquired the military's enthusiasm for intelligence work. It is the nature of intelligence services to enlarge themselves. Where trouble does not exist they invent it; where it does, they magnify it. The Chicago intelligence apparatus conditioned policemen to react not to what was actually happening but to what yippie boasts made them think would happen. Thus in looking at the Festival of Life they didn't see a handful of put-on artists but rather the entering wedge of riot and rebellion.

Everyone knows what happened when the beards and bigots met that week. Despite Daley's best efforts, much of it was shown on television. Afterward it was written up in great detail. The President's own National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence issued a special report titled *Rights in Conflict* (the Walker Report) that called

the worst violence a police riot. The protesters, not only yippies but the more sober elements of the Mobe, were denied permits to sleep in the parks and make protest marches. When they did so anyway they were beaten, gassed, and Maced. No one was safe from the policemen's frenzy. Their sergeants lost control of them repeatedly, and they beat reporters, bystanders, and yippies with equal abandon. Six hundred demonstrators were arrested and several hundred injured badly enough to need medical attention. (About a hundred policemen suffered injuries too, mainly cut knuckles.) The police crowned their triumph by raiding Senator McCarthy's campaign headquarters from which, they insisted, garbage and insults had been showered on them.

Not that it was all a matter of humorless brutality. There were amusing moments too. The yippies had their own candidate for President, a real live pig named Pigasus. Police penetration was so inventive that one agent became an aide of yippie leader Jerry Rubin before arresting him for sedition. Allen Ginsberg lent color to the events by chanting to promote tranquility. It seemed to affect the police little, though.⁹ Jean Genet, the radical French writer, was tear-gassed, and afterward he, William Burroughs, and Terry Southern, all of whom covered the events for *Esquire* magazine, marched regularly with the yippies. Hugh Hefner of *Playboy* was whacked on the bottom by a police club, which was not so much an affront to his personal dignity as to the entire structure of consumer capitalism which he so brilliantly adorned. Abbie Hoffman, a keen student of Marshall McLuhan, painted an obscene word on his forehead as insurance against unwanted photographs. But he encouraged the yippies to give obscene interviews. He knew the dirty words would be blipped out, but he felt blipping was the moral equivalent of the blank spaces in censored Saigon newspapers. At such times emptiness spoke more eloquently than words.

All in all, the total effect was more ghastly than not. Especially for the insurgent Democrats at the convention who knew that those who were, in a sense, their constituents were getting beaten in the streets even as they were being crushed by the Johnson-Humphrey steamroller. But before that, the preliminaries had to be gotten through. Credentials and platform planks had to be fought over, and delegates solicited. The California delegation was especially prized. With Ken-

⁹ This remark is not meant frivolously. Ginsberg was not only a good poet (the only important figure in the beat generation to remain pertinent to the sixties) but a true mystic. He devoted years to the study of Mantra Yoga, practiced its austere disciplines, and trained himself to chant, as he did at Chicago, for seven hours at a time. Though Ginsberg lent himself to the yippie put-on, he was himself in earnest and took the Festival of Life to be just that. He also possessed a very sweet character and an exceptionally fluent and expressive speaking manner, as he showed later in testifying for the defendants at the conspiracy trial which followed these events.

neddy dead it might go either way, so the three major candidates, McCarthy, Humphrey, and McGovern, all spoke to it. McGovern's candidacy was hard to figure. Earlier he had almost endorsed McCarthy, and might have had McCarthy's neglect not offended him. McGovern was a good liberal and a dove. Except on the issue of presidential strength he generally agreed with McCarthy. But he was part of the Kennedy connection, and when the Kennedy followers asked him to run at the convention he did. It's not clear why. Some thought it was a spoiler candidacy to save Kennedy delegates from having to vote for McCarthy. Others thought just the opposite, that McGovern ran to keep from Humphrey the delegates who hated McCarthy so much that they would go with the Vice-President if he was the only alternative. As the Kennedy following was based more on personality than principle, these were vital considerations. In the event, it hardly mattered as the combined McCarthy-McGovern vote was only a fraction of what either needed to scare Humphrey. McGovern's intentions were thus never put to the test.

Apart from providing a haven for Kennedy soreheads, McGovern gave reporters an agreeable figure to write about. He said all the right things, unlike McCarthy who, as Norman Mailer put it, "was damned if he would move a phony finger for any occasion." And he said them without the maddening discursiveness that made even Humphrey's friends despair at times. When the Vice-President spoke to the California delegates he took three times as long as McCarthy, "trudging through an imprecision of language, a formal slovenliness of syntax which enabled him to shunt phrases back and forth like a switchman who locates a freight car by moving everything in the yard." Afterward the press agreed that George McGovern, the beau ideal of orthodox liberalism, looked the best. McCarthy, in contrast, was even more himself than usual. His contempt for sentimentality, political rituals, and liberal cant was never displayed to better effect. Naturally this turned off the California delegates, but it appealed greatly to Mailer who had not really liked McCarthy before. As a swinger, and with charisma of his own, Mailer naturally favored Kennedy. He liked tough guys and Beautiful People, and McCarthy's operation seemed short of both. But McCarthy's splendid consistency at Chicago won Mailer's heart. He could see why "Negroes in general had never been charmed with McCarthy. If he was the epitome of Whitey at his best, that meant Whitey at ten removes, dry wit, stiff back, two-and-a-half centuries of Augustan culture and their distillate—the ironic manners of the tightest country gentry: the Blacks did not want Whitey at his best and bonniest in a year when they were out to find every justification . . . to hate the Honkie." Nor was such a man the type to gain Mailer's favor under normal circumstances. But circumstances were far from normal. The police

were rioting in the streets. The festival of death was grinding down the best Democrats. The "reign of piety and iron" that Robert Lowell had predicted earlier seemed well under way.

Amidst this moral squalor, rendered especially grotesque by the trappings of a political convention, McCarthy stood even taller than before. While his supporters raved and wept, and the ship foundered, he paced the quarterdeck as he had all that year. The sails were in tatters, his standard nailed to the mainmast, but he had one gun left to fire and he discharged it at the California delegates. It took some brass to summon him in the first place. He had campaigned mightily in California and they all knew where he stood. He was not going to play games with them, nor save their faces with some fake gesture at the last minute. If they voted for him it would be for what he had said and done all along. He began by observing that his position on Vietnam was too well known to bear repeating. Then, as Norman Mailer tells it, he turned to the absurd criticisms that had been made of him, "most recently the suggestion that I would be a passive President. Well, I think a little passivity in that office is all right, a kind of balance, I think. I have never quite known what active compassion is. Actually compassion, in my mind, is to suffer with someone, not in advance of him.' He paused, 'or not in public necessarily.' He paused again. Here came the teeth. The voice never altered. 'But I have been, whether I have been passive or not, the most active candidate in the party this year.' He brought the curtain down with that dignity which was his most unique political possession. 'Many stood on the sidelines, as I said earlier, on the hilltops, dancing around the bonfires. Few came down into the valley where the action was. And I said then that if one challenged the President he had to be prepared to be President. It is like striking at the King—it is a dangerous thing.' How dangerous only he could know." "Yes," Mailer concluded, "the reporter had met many candidates, but McCarthy was the first who felt like a President."

Of course McCarthy was not going to be President, as he admitted in a typically impolitic interview that very evening. But before that was made official, more outrages had to be committed. The next day, when the minority anti-war plank was defeated, the convention band played "This Could Be the Start of Something Big," while the insurgent delegates, led by Theodore Bikel of New York, sang "We Shall Overcome." They voted that night at the height of the police riot downtown. Senator Abraham Ribicoff of Connecticut made his feelings clear while nominating McGovern: "With George McGovern as President we would not have to have such Gestapo tactics in the streets of Chicago. With George McGovern we would not have to have the National Guard." There were cheers and boos at this. The Illinois delegation rose to scream insults at

him, and no one will ever forget the sight of Mayor Daley shaking his fist and mouthing what seemed to be obscenities at Ribicoff, who looked directly at him, smiled, and said quietly, "How hard it is to accept the truth." Then Humphrey was nominated handily, and the delegates adjourned to their hotels, which reeked of tear gas for the most part.

The next day Humphrey chose his friend, Senator Edmund S. Muskie of Maine, to run with him, and accepted the nomination in a speech that touched every base. On the one hand he deplored anarchy in the streets and called for law and order. On the other, he expressed a dislike of police states. And Humphrey thanked the absent President Johnson for all the blessings he had showered on Democrats. Then the band played "Happy Days Are Here Again," and Humphrey beamed away, his great round face shining in the TV lights.* McGovern loyally trooped up and congratulated him, McCarthy didn't. Humphrey seemed to find his nomination no less enjoyable for the way he had gained it. He was ruined all the same. The party lay in shambles around him. The whole country had seen the violence in Chicago, some of it within the convention hall itself where ubiquitous security guards roughed up delegates and newsmen alike. (One delegate cried out that he had been elected to attend the convention, not sentenced to it.) People had seen the insurgents cry after a moving filmed biography of Robert Kennedy was shown, and heard them sing the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" until Daley shut them up, cleverly for a change, by having a Negro delegate give an unscheduled tribute to Martin Luther King. Only Humphrey retained any illusions about the coming election.

The Democrats would lose, though not because of the police riot in Chicago. What Nixon was soon to call the "silent majority" liked to see hippies and such beaten up. Law and order could hardly be too viciously applied to suit people demoralized by years of war, protest, and youthful contempt for the bourgeois life. Mayor Daley got a lot of fan mail. The newsmen who had been outraged, especially when beaten themselves, soon fell into line. Walter Cronkite of CBS, who had gotten so carried away as to complain of the police brutality (especially to CBS reporters), had an abject interview with Mayor Daley who straightened him out. Within a few weeks most newspapers and magazines saw how

* One of Humphrey's least-discussed liabilities was the fact that he didn't look like a President. He was overweight, and with his big balding dome, square little chin, and rat-trap mouth offered a rather comic appearance. This was, of course, not a good reason for voting against him, but it must surely have cost him votes all the same. The country had had unprepossessing chief executives before, yet no one could remember when such a funny-looking man had been nominated for, let alone elected to, the highest office. The problem was especially acute in an age when TV mercilessly exposed a man's physical shortcomings. It was not yet necessary to be, as Nixon put it, "a pretty boy," still, average looks were probably a minimum requirement for future candidates.

the wind was blowing and came out fearlessly against streetfighting and for law and order. All this was grist to Nixon's mill because Humphrey could never top him on that issue, try as he might. The more demands for repression, the better off Nixon was. Like anti-communism in the 1950's, law and order was (Wallace excepted) a Republican monopoly. So although Democrats had suppressed the revolution in Chicago, the GOP gained most from it. On the other hand, the people who were offended by the Daley-Humphrey pogrom were nearly all Democrats, and energetic ones at that. Liberals, intellectuals, and the active young were a minority in the party, but they were crucial to any Democratic victory in national elections. Without their help as fund-raisers, publicists, and precinct-workers a Democrat did not become President of the United States. They were alienated by Chicago. Many never returned to the fold. Those who did, after Humphrey realized his mistake, returned too late to alter events.*

Accordingly, after Chicago the question seemed to be not would Humphrey win, but would Wallace draw off enough votes to throw the election into the House of Representatives. The Wallace threat was not so serious as it seemed then, but it was real enough. George Wallace was the first genuine demagogue since Huey Long with presidential aspirations. (Joe McCarthy, for example, never tried to organize his following into a coherent movement. Though demagogic, he was not a true demagogue.) And, also like Long, Wallace was not chiefly a racist. In fact, he was once quite the opposite by Alabama standards. He got elected to the state legislature in 1946 at a time when he was too poor to afford a car. He canvassed his rural district by walking and hitching rides. He was then an admirer of Jim Folsom, a populist insurgent who was elected governor that year by defying the "bourbon" Establishment, the "Big Mules" as he called them. But they continued to control the legislature so Folsom did not get the reforms he wanted, like reapportionment and repeal of the poll tax. Folsom was very moderate on the race question. During his second term after *Brown v. Board of Education* he resisted the white backlash and hoped for compliance with the law. A huge (six feet, eight inches), colorful, independent man, he completed his downfall by inviting Adam Clayton Powell to the executive mansion for a drink. Wallace then got reluctantly off his bandwagon. But the big change in Wallace came in 1958 when he tried to succeed Folsom and was beaten by a rabid but obscure segregationist. Wallace is alleged to have said afterward, "John Patterson out-niggued me. And boys, I'm

* Some people argued that McCarthy's defeat showed the futility of politics. But his campaign forced Johnson to leave office and Nixon to gear down the war. These were the most substantial accomplishments of any peace movement in American history. To despise them was to abandon all hope for popular action.

not going to be out-niggued again." And he wasn't. In 1962 he defeated Folsom in the primary, assisted by the fact that Folsom showed up drunk for a state-wide TV program. Then he out-segged his opponent in the runoff.* His promise to stand in the schoolhouse door if segregation threatened was especially admired.

Race apart, Wallace was a good governor. He largely succeeded at what Folsom had hoped to do. He built fourteen junior colleges and fifteen new trade schools. He put through a \$100 million school construction program, got free textbooks for Alabama schoolchildren, combated water pollution, and much else, all in the best populist tradition. The tax system stayed regressive, a certain amount of corruption continued (for the sake of his organization, not himself; he was always financially scrupulous). But otherwise Wallace built up a fine record. Still, when the University of Alabama was desegregated, he did stand in the door and thus became a national figure. He got many invitations to speak at college campuses thereafter and accepted all he could. They enhanced his appeal to the backlash, for everywhere he was disrupted. (At Harvard two of his aides were caught in a band of pickets outside the auditorium who were singing "We Shall Overcome.") One turned to the other and muttered fiercely, "Sing, you fool. Sing! I'm too old to run.")

It was in Wisconsin that an admirer persuaded him to enter the presidential primary. At the time he had only \$800 and no organization, but he got 35 per cent of the vote in Wisconsin and then went on to get 30 per cent in Indiana and 45 per cent in Maryland. When Goldwater was nominated, Wallace dropped out so as not to split the conservative vote. But the experience gave him national ambitions. Though he called himself a conservative, Wallace was far from ideological. His adviser on theory and part-time speechwriter, John Kohn, a crusty old racist, thought Wallace didn't even dislike Negroes. But he saw that others did and used the race issue much as Joe McCarthy used anti-communism, without having any personal feel for what the rage was all about. Since his candidacy was based on exploiting negative emotions, and was meant to attract conservative Southerners and bigoted working-class Northerners, it was impossible for Wallace to have anything resembling a program. Instead he went around the country smashing straw men like the "left-wing theoreticians, briefcase totin' bureaucrats, ivory-tower guideline writers, bearded anarchists, smart-aleck editorial writers and pointy-headed professors." "There are more of us than there are of

* Alabama prevents governors from succeeding themselves, so popular ones can run only in every other election. Folsom was not the only humane Southern politician to be ruined by the reaction against school desegregation. It played a part in the downfall of Governor Earl Long of Louisiana too.

them," he reminded his audiences. And he had a few simple prescriptions for every ill. Bureaucrats would be stripped of their briefcases. Looters would be shot. "If I become President and some anarchist lies down in front of my automobile, it's going to be the last automobile he lies down in front of," he invariably remarked. This sort of thing paid off. So did his identification with humble folk, the steelworkers, barbers, and so forth who were thought to be his constituents. Wallace did not make bluntly racist appeals. He didn't need to. Instead he promised to win the war in Vietnam, restore states' rights, secure law and order, repeal open-housing laws, and in general restore the country to its rightful owners—assuming that the rightful owners were bigots, warmongers, and illiterates.

Wallace faced two big problems in 1968. One was outflanking Spiro Agnew. The other was selecting a running mate. The problem here was that no one else in the country occupied his peculiar position. No other Southern racist had a following in the North. No Northerner of any standing was willing to run on such a ticket. He held off choosing a vice-presidential candidate as long as he could. Finally he persuaded retired General Curtis LeMay to go with him. It immediately became obvious that this was a mistake, if an inescapable one given the dearth of possibilities. LeMay was a famous warrior, a good thing for a Wallace man to be, but his bloodthirstiness was extreme even for such company. At his initial press conference he said that it would be "most efficient" to drop nuclear weapons on North Vietnam. The more he and Wallace tried to explain what he meant, the worse it sounded. Afterward he predicted dolefully, "I'll be damned lucky if I don't appear as a drooling idiot whose only solution is to drop atomic bombs all over the world."⁵

Spiro Agnew, whose name, as his wife observed, was hardly a household word, became equally troublesome for Wallace. Nixon's strategy was to seize the middle while Agnew captured as much of the right as could be gotten from Wallace. Agnew was not always as skillful at this as he later became. He declined to visit a ghetto on the grounds that they were all alike. On conservation his position was that if you've seen one tree you've seen them all. He referred to Polish-Americans as "Polacks," which was hardly the way to win ethnic votes. But as Muskie was of Polish origin and most Polish-Americans would vote for him anyway, this probably did the ticket no great harm. He once described a corpulent Japanese-American reporter as a "fat Jap." But again, the

⁵ Actually, LeMay was one militarist who was every bit as bad as he seemed. During World War II he had ordered, on his own initiative, fire raids against Japan that killed more people than the atomic bombs. Had the Japanese won he would have been first on their list of war criminals. Later he was an advocate of pre-emptive war. The country that staged a Pearl Harbor need never fear one, was apparently his motto.

Japanese-American vote was not large, so little harm was done. And Agnew was protected by his Greek ancestry from charges of WASPish chauvinism. He was more on target when he said that Humphrey was "squishy soft" on communism, which was certainly news to the people who remembered Humphrey's witch-hunting days. Though false, it pleased the right, as it was meant to. Agnew was an important reason why Wallace carried only five Southern states.⁶

As the campaign developed a surprising thing happened. Humphrey started gaining. In August the Gallup poll put him sixteen points behind Nixon. On October 21 Humphrey had cut that lead by half. There were many reasons for this. The initial gap was unnatural and bound to diminish in a country where a majority of registered voters were Democrats. The memory of Chicago dimmed. Nixon made no effort to win over dissident liberal Democrats. Having plotted out a campaign based on the Southern strategy, the backlash against students, hippies, and blacks, and a series of slick, bland television promotions, Nixon stuck to it. On Vietnam he accomplished the remarkable feat of not having a position of any kind. He had a plan to end the war, it was said, though not by the candidate himself, but could not reveal it until after the election. For sheer gall it surpassed all previous political hoaxes. Nixon had no plan, as time showed, but claiming to have one was enough to muffle the issue, though it didn't appeal to those Democrats who knew that a Republican would be freer to end the war than a Democrat. Many remembered that when Eisenhower made peace in Korea, President Truman said that he could have done so on the same basis long before, which was technically true, but politically false. The Democrats then, as in 1968, were the victims of their own policy. They could not end the war on terms good enough to save them from charges of appeasement and being soft on communism. Eisenhower could and did. Nixon could have done the same in Vietnam had he wanted to.

His evasion provided Humphrey with a chance to win some dissidents back, and at Salt Lake City on September 30 Humphrey took it. His concession was not very great, merely a pledge to end the bombing in Vietnam if the communists showed a willingness to restore the Demilitarized Zone. It was the kind of thing that Johnson was forever promising and forever failing to do. But Humphrey had to defy the President to say it, thus showing his independence. And it gave discouraged anti-war Democrats an excuse for endorsing him. McCarthy finally

⁶ Agnew really scared many. This made Edmund Muskie, an attractive figure to begin with, look even better. One of the most effective Democratic advertisements was a sign that flashed on TV reading "Spiro Agnew for Vice President," followed by hysterical laughter. Then these words appeared: "This would be serious if it wasn't so funny." Picking Muskie was the smartest thing Humphrey did all year.

came over with his customary enthusiasm. At the end of October he said, "I believe the Vice-President is a man who can be relied upon to tell the difference between the pale horse of death and the white horse of victory. I am not sure Mr. Nixon can make that distinction." It wasn't much, but it was all Humphrey had coming to him. And it was nearly adequate.

On the day before the election Gallup reported that Nixon was only two points ahead of Humphrey. When the balloting was over the distance had narrowed even more. Humphrey got only seven-tenths of 1 per cent less of the popular vote than Nixon. Nixon was elected with the smallest percentage of the vote since Woodrow Wilson won a three-cornered race in 1912. He had a comfortable majority in the electoral college, though, so there was no constitutional crisis. (All the same, George Wallace's 13.5 per cent of the popular vote was very respectable. It was the best showing of any third-party candidate since 1924.) Now Richard Milhous Nixon was President at last. Luck, accident, and his own fantastic resilience had put him in charge. But the country whose leadership he had so painfully acquired was not quite the prize it had once been. Its future was still being squandered in Vietnam. It was more divided than in many years. Inflation and unemployment were rising together. Most kinds of environmental pollution were getting worse. There were hard decisions to be made about all these matters and more. Should work continue on the Supersonic Transport, MURV, and other projects? And what of the urban crisis, the health crisis, and too many others to mention? It seemed as if no major groups were without grave problems that Washington was supposed to solve. Nixon had won, but what had he won?

William L. O'Neill

Coming Apart

An Informal History of America in the 1960's

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