



EDWARD M. KENNEDY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewer's Briefing Materials **Edward M. Kennedy Interview, 6/17/2005**

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Miller Center Documents¹

- Edward M. Kennedy 1968 Presidential Campaign Timeline.

Secondary Source Materials

- Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *Robert Kennedy and His Times* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1978) pp. 822-857.
- Adam Clymer, *Edward M. Kennedy: A Biography* (New York: William Morrow, 1999) pp. 99-126.
- Burton Hersch, *The Education of Edward Kennedy: A Family Biography* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1972) pp. 298-329.
- Milton Gwartzman oral history interview, by Ronald J. Grele, 01/19/1966, Washington, D.C., John F. Kennedy Library, pp. 106-142.
- David W. Burke oral history interview, by Larry J. Hackman, 12/8/1971, Robert F. Kennedy Oral History Program, John F. Kennedy Library, pp. 27-57.
- Gerard Doherty oral history interview, by Larry J. Hackman, 02/03/1972, Robert F. Kennedy Oral History Program, John F. Kennedy Library.
- *1968 Congressional Quarterly Almanac* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1969) pp. 971-973.
- Press release from the office of Senator Edward M. Kennedy, 7/26/1968.

Other

- Milt Gwartzman memo to Jim Young, Steve Knott and Rob Martin, re: Questions concerning 1968 presidential campaign, 5/2/2002.
- Milt Gwartzman, "Oral history interview: 1968 campaign."

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EDWARD M. KENNEDY 1968 CAMPAIGN TIMELINE

Prepared by Rob Martin

Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, 06/14/2005

1967

- Fall* Allard Lowenstein, a leader in the Vietnam peace movement, asks Robert F. Kennedy (RFK) to challenge President Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) in 1968. RFK declines to challenge the sitting Democratic president and Senator Eugene J. McCarthy (D-MN) is later recruited.
- October* Edward M. Kennedy (EMK) meets in New York on the 8th with a group of Kennedy advisors, including Stephen Smith, Kenny O'Donnell, Ted Sorensen, Fred Dutton, William vanden Heuvel, Pierre Salinger, Chuck Daly and Ivan Nestigan of Wisconsin, to discuss whether RFK should challenge LBJ in 1968. EMK argues that RFK should wait until 1972 to run. The group reportedly agrees that RFK should not consider challenging LBJ unless LBJ's position grows much weaker. Joe Dolan is instructed to set-up a "low key political operation," in which polls would be taken in New Hampshire. (Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *Robert Kennedy and His Times*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1978, p. 829)
- November* McCarthy announces he will challenge LBJ in four Democratic primaries –the April 2nd Wisconsin primary, the May 14th Nebraska primary, the May 28th Oregon primary, and the June 4th California primary. (Adam Clymer, *Edward Kennedy: A Biography*, New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1999, p. 104; *1968 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Service, 1968, p. 974)
- December* LBJ fires Robert McNamara as Secretary of Defense and names him to head the World Bank. The move is interpreted within the Kennedy camp as signaling LBJ's reluctance to consider changes on Vietnam.
- RFK holds a meeting at vanden Heuvel's house in New York on the 10th to discuss the 1968 presidential campaign in light of McCarthy's recent entry into the race. Arthur Schlesinger and Richard Goodwin are reportedly the two strongest advocates of an RFK candidacy. EMK continues to argue that RFK should wait until 1972 and RFK is reportedly still concerned that his candidacy could split the party, even though a challenge has already been mounted against the sitting Democratic president. (Schlesinger, p. 832)

1968

- January* EMK makes his second visit to South Vietnam on the 1st. EMK had first traveled to South Vietnam in October, 1965 as Chairman of the Judiciary Committee's

Subcommittee on Refugees and Escapees. After his second trip, EMK begins to speak out more forcefully against the war. (James MacGregor Burns, *Edward Kennedy and the Camelot Legacy*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1976, p. 348; Clymer, pp. 79-82, 101-102)

RFK announces that he will not challenge LBJ in 1968 “under any foreseeable circumstances.” (*The New York Times*, 01/30/1968)

RFK draws closer to entering the 1968 presidential campaign after the Tet Offensive seriously damages confidence in LBJ’s prosecution of the war. McNamara also privately informs RFK around this time that LBJ might not run for re-election. (David Burke oral history interview, John F. Kennedy Library, 12/08/1971, pp. 26-35; Milton Gwirtzman oral history interview, John F. Kennedy Library, 03/16/1972, pp. 107-109; Clymer, pp. 104-106; Schlesinger, pp. 832-833)

February RFK asks EMK to meet with Goodwin, who is currently working on McCarthy’s New Hampshire campaign, to discuss the possibility of RFK’s running in 1968. EMK is still arguing that RFK should wait until 1972 to run. (Clymer, pp. 104-106; Gwirtzman interview, 03/16/1972, pp. 107-109; Schlesinger, pp. 845-846)

March On the 4th, RFK instructs Fred Dutton to inform EMK that he has decided to pursue the Democratic nomination for president. RFK sends a message to McCarthy about his decision on the 11th. (Clymer, pp. 106-107)

McCarthy loses the New Hampshire primary on the 12th but demonstrates LBJ’s vulnerability by receiving 42.2 percent of the vote. (*1968 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 975)

On the 13th, RFK announces on the *CBS Evening News* that he is reconsidering his decision not to run in 1968. EMK watches RFK’s announcement on television while attending a meeting at Stephen Smith’s New York apartment. The meeting, which had been initially convened to assess the impact of McCarthy’s showing in New Hampshire, quickly turns into a campaign organizing session. EMK subsequently takes responsibility for the non-primary states. (James W. Hilty, *Robert Kennedy: Brother Protector*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997, p. 614; Clymer, pp. 107-108; Burke interview, 12/08/1971, pp. 44-46)

Sorensen meets with LBJ to propose the creation of a commission to review LBJ’s Vietnam policy. RFK and Sorensen later meet with Defense Secretary Clark Clifford to discuss the commission, but LBJ later rejects the proposal. (Schlesinger, pp. 851-852)

EMK travels to McCarthy’s house in Green Bay, Wisconsin the evening of the 15th to explain why RFK has decided to enter the primary and to discuss how RFK and McCarthy might work together to coordinate the anti-Vietnam vote.

McCarthy refuses to consider making any deals and EMK returns immediately to RFK's estate, Hickory Hill, in the early morning of the 16th to pass on the news to RFK, Sorensen, Schlesinger and vanden Heuvel. Later that morning at breakfast, EMK ends Sorensen's, Schlesinger's and vanden Heuvel's questioning of whether RFK should enter the race, arguing, "No. He's made up his mind... We can't talk about it any more." (Schlesinger, pp. 854-855; Gwartzman interview, 03/16/1972, pp. 111-113; Burns, p. 348; Clymer, pp. 105-109)

On the 16th, RFK announces from the Senate Caucus Room that he will enter the Democratic primaries. EMK holds an important organizational meeting in his Senate office later that day to set-up campaign assignments. (Burton Hersh, *The Education of Edward Kennedy*, New York: Morrow, 1972, p. 298; Clymer, pp. 108-109; *The Washington Post*, 03/17/1968)

RFK decides to enter the Indiana primary on the 25th. Indiana is the first primary for which the filing deadline, which is the 28th, has not yet passed. The decision is reached after EMK sends Gerard Doherty to Indiana to assess RFK's chances in the state. Upon Doherty's return, EMK and Doherty convince RFK at a meeting presided over by Sorensen and Smith in Washington, D.C. that RFK should enter the primary. EMK is assigned responsibility for Indiana, in addition to the non-primary states. (Gerard Doherty oral history interview, John F. Kennedy Library, 02/03/1972; Burke interview, pp. 48- 51; Clymer, pp. 109-111; Hersh, pp. 298-301)

On the 31st, LBJ stuns the nation by announcing that he will not seek reelection. LBJ also announces a partial stoppage of the bombing in North Vietnam. Much of LBJ's support for the Democratic presidential nomination subsequently moves to Vice President Hubert Humphrey. (Clymer, p. 110; *1968 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 975)

April Martin Luther King, Jr. is assassinated on the 4th. RFK informs a black audience in Indianapolis of the tragedy and urges calm. (Clymer, p. 111; Hersh, p. 308)

May RFK wins the Indiana primary on the 7th with 42.3 percent of the vote, defeating McCarthy and favorite-son Governor Roger Branigin. (*1968 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 972, 976)

After Indiana, EMK spends much time throughout the month campaigning in a number of states, including South Dakota, Pennsylvania, Iowa, Nebraska, Michigan, Arizona, New Mexico, Vermont and Maine. (Hersh, pp. 315-322)

"Kennedy forces" win the Washington, D.C. delegate election. (*1968 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 976)

RFK wins the Nebraska primary on the 14th with 51.7 percent of the vote. (*1968 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 972; Clymer, p. 111)

RFK loses the Oregon primary to McCarthy on the 28th. (Clymer, pp. 111-112)

June

RFK debates McCarthy in San Francisco on the 1st.

The Kennedy slate defeats the Humphrey and McCarthy slates in South Dakota on the 4th. (1968 *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 976)

After winning the California primary on the 4th, RFK is shot in Los Angeles on the 5th. EMK immediately flies from San Francisco to Los Angeles with Burke and John Seigenthaler, a close friend of RFK's who has been heading the northern California campaign. RFK dies the next day. (Clymer, pp. 112-114)

EMK delivers a powerful eulogy at RFK's funeral service at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City on the 8th. Joan Kennedy had returned early from her trip to Paris to be with EMK and to attend the funeral. After the funeral, the Kennedys travel with the coffin by train to Washington, D.C. RFK is buried in Arlington National Cemetery. (Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, *Times to Remember*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1974, pp. 475-476; Schlesinger, p. 915; Burns, p. 348)

EMK and his family sail from New York to Hyannis Port with Dun Gifford, EMK's aide and old sailing friend. EMK goes on to spend much time in the coming weeks in seclusion sailing at the Cape. (Clymer, p. 119)

On the 10th, associates of EMK report that he will not run with Humphrey or replace RFK as a candidate for the Democratic nomination for president. Speculation had begun almost immediately after RFK's death that EMK could run with Humphrey to help unify the Democratic Party. (*The New York Times*, 06/07/1968, 06/11/1968)

EMK and his mother, Rose Kennedy, thank the public for their sympathy in a television appearance on the 15th. (Clymer, p. 119)

The New York Times reports on the 18th that close associates of Humphrey are calling for a Humphrey-EMK ticket.

July

At some point in the month, EMK travels to Spain with Claude Hooton, Chuck McDermott, and his nephew, Joseph Patrick Kennedy II.

On the 13th, former Ohio Governor Michael V. DiSalle announces that he will nominate EMK for president at the Democratic National Convention. (*The New York Times*, 07/14/1968; *The Washington Post*, 07/14/1968)

In an interview on the 18th, Humphrey indicates that he would select EMK as his running-mate should he win the Democratic presidential nomination. (*The New York Times*, 07/18/1968)

EMK issues a press statement on the 26th announcing that he will not accept the vice presidential nomination in 1968. He explains that his decision is based on “purely personal” reasons and is “final, firm, and not subject to further consideration.” (Public statement, Office of Senator Edward M. Kennedy, 07/26/1968)

August

Senator George S. McGovern (D-SD) enters the race for the Democratic presidential nomination on the 10th with pledges to end the war in Vietnam and to “heal” domestic divisions. McGovern quickly receives the endorsement of several former RFK supporters. (*The New York Times*, 08/11/1968)

In a speech at Holy Cross on the 21st, EMK announces he will return to public life to continue fighting for his brothers’ causes. This is his first public appearance since RFK’s death. (Clymer, pp. 121-122; *The New York Times*, 08/22/1968)

Humphrey meets with EMK on the 22nd at his home in McLean, Virginia and asks him to join him on the ticket as vice president. EMK declines and assures Humphrey that he will not seek the nomination for president. (Clymer, p. 122)

EMK sends Steve Smith to Chicago on the 23rd. Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley urges EMK to consider accepting the presidential nomination, while aides such as Gwirtzman and Burke fly to Hyannis Port to reportedly advise EMK to stay out of the race. EMK decides to stay out. (Hersh, p. 351; Clymer, p. 122)

The Democratic National Convention opens in Chicago on the 26th with a movement to draft EMK for the presidential nomination spearheaded by Daley, DiSalle, and Jesse Unruh, speaker of the California State assembly. Smith works behind the scenes tallying the number of potential votes for EMK. (Clymer, pp. 123-124; *The Washington Post*, 08/27/1968)

On the 27th, Smith meets with McCarthy to discuss a deal in which McCarthy would drop his candidacy and urge his delegates to vote for EMK. The deal collapses when McCarthy supporters leak information about the meeting to the press. When Smith calls EMK to tell him that he has the votes to be nominated for president, EMK makes the final decision to not accept the nomination. (Clymer, pp. 123-126; *The New York Times*, 08/28/1968)

Humphrey wins the presidential nomination on the first ballot on the 28th after the movement against him collapses in light of EMK’s decision not to run. Senator Edmund Muskie (D-ME) is selected as Humphrey’s running-mate. (*Wall Street Journal*, 08/29/1968)

- September* EMK campaigns with Humphrey at a rally in Boston on the 19th. While the rally attracts a large crowd, peace demonstrators chant hostile slogans. (Clymer, pp. 127-128; *The New York Times*, 09/20/1968)
- EMK praises Humphrey for breaking with LBJ on Vietnam by announcing that, if elected, he would stop the bombing of North Vietnam to better work towards peace.
- October* EMK speaks out against George Wallace in a speech to a labor union meeting in New Bedford, Massachusetts.
- November* Richard M. Nixon wins the presidential election with 43.4 percent of the popular vote and 301 electoral votes. (Clymer, p. 129)