

## A Telegram and a Train Ride

*Editor's Note: The content of this chapter that appears in this Miller font is taken from an article in The Boston Globe, June 11, 1968.*

<b>CLASS OF SERVICE</b> This is a full message unless its deferred character is indicated by the symbol symbol.	<b>WESTERN UNION</b> W. P. MARSHALL CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD TELEGRAM R. W. McFALL PRESIDENT	<b>SYMBOLS</b> DL=Day Letter NL=Night Letter LT=International Letter Telegram
The time shown in the date line on domestic telegrams is LOCAL TIME at point of origin. Time of receipt is LOCAL TIME at point of destination.		
1BC 073 =BNB AHA676 AHZ18 1968 JUN 7 PM 4 40		
AHZ18 RX PDB=AH NEW YORK NY 7 1= JOHN COAN (F AND T)= 6 WILLESLEY RD BEVERLY MASS= YOU ARE INVITED TO ATTEND A REQUIEM MASS IN MEMORY OF ROBERT FRANCIS KENNEDY AT ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL IN NEW YORK CITY ON SATURDAY, JUNE 8, AT 10:00 A.M. PLEASE ENTER THROUGH THE FIFTH AVENUE ENTRANCE BY 9:30 A.M. INTERMENT WILL BE AT ARLINGTON CEMETERY, ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA, AT 5:30 P.M. YOU ARE WELCOME TO TRAVEL ON THE FUNERAL TRAIN FROM NEW YORK TO WASHINGTON. BUSES TO PENNSYLVANIA STATION WILL LEAVE THE FIFTH AVENUE SIDE OF THE CATHEDRAL IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE MASS. THIS TELEGRAM WILL ADMIT ONLY THE PERSON OR PERSONS TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED AND MUST BE RETAINED AND PRESENTED FOR IDENTIFICATION WHENEVER IT IS REQUESTED. THE KENNEDY FAMILY.		

*The ride home Friday night was typical, lots of traffic, hot, I was late, and the radio had the news and comments on the assassination. It was about 6:30 when I reached home, and my 11-year-old daughter Julie greeted me at the driveway with a cryptic remark: "Mommy's got something to tell you." This sounded like trouble, so I pried a little, and Julie was dying to tell me. "You've gotten a telegram inviting you to the funeral tomorrow."*

I first met Bob Kennedy in 1945, when I was a 17-year old freshman lineman on the Harvard football team, and he was a junior running back and receiver. I had no idea who the Kennedys were when I got to Harvard. I knew him through the Varsity Club, but like millions of others around the country, I felt close to him in my beliefs. After a telegram and a train ride, I felt I knew him a little better.



## **The Summer of '68**

In the summer of 1968, the crowds flocked to Bob's Presidential campaign rallies, especially the young people and minorities. It seemed he was on his way to victory, but tragedy struck the Kennedy family—again. Bob was shot leaving the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles following his victory speech after the California primary. It was evening on the east coast, and I didn't know anything about it until the next morning.

Only five years before, Bob's brother, President John F. Kennedy, had been assassinated in Dallas.

By the time I saw the invitation to Bob's funeral, it was going on 7 PM, and I would have to leave Jane home with our seven children (and one on the way) but there was no question I would go. Jane knew I wouldn't want to miss it and had already made travel arrangements for me.

*I caught the last shuttle to the airport and ran into Hal Moffie, a former classmate also headed to the funeral. Both of us had trouble finding words to say, so we headed to the newsstand for something to read on the plane. Selections were limited, but Strength to Love, by Martin Luther King, Jr. seemed to jump off the shelf at me.*

*Once in New York, Hal and I had different hotels, so we parted. I checked into the Sheraton at 11:30, turned on the TV and I was immediately in St. Patrick's Cathedral, viewing the casket electronically, and then the camera flashed to the bronze doors, the crowds in the streets so familiar to everyone. I had to go over there. I walked a couple of blocks to Fifth Avenue and down to the Cathedral. Police were everywhere.*

*Fifth Avenue at midnight is always busy and interesting, but tonight it was very quiet...yet busier than ever. I didn't want to get in the line at the cathedral, but I did want to soak up the atmosphere, the feeling that I had been hearing so much about...the people. Bob Kennedy had great appeal to youth, but these people were all ages. Young and old. Very young and very old, many babies and youngsters one and two years old. I thought I would like to have taken my older ones down, but the telegram invitation didn't allow me. The line snaked from 51st Street down to 47th, and back up. I met a fellow headed home to the Bronx who had been in line for 6 hours.*

*I headed back to the hotel, now 2 am. I dozed off but couldn't sleep. I kept waking up to see the scene at St. Patrick's on TV.*

*I arrived for the funeral, where police and officials on the steps of the cathedral carefully checked my telegram. Familiar faces there were teammates Cleo O'Donnell, Jim Noonan, and Chief Bender. How do you greet old friends at such an occasion? You have the feeling that a smile would be out of place, but whenever these old teammates meet there are sure to be laughs. But now? In a few minutes, we were inside.*

*At each place in the pew was a Mass book and small card with Bob's picture on one side and some quotations on the other. "Dear God, please take care of him who tried to take care of yours." The pews filled steadily. Cleo, Jim and I were together next to Father Walsh from Boston College.*

*There were familiar faces all around...Eartha Kitt, Sidney Poitier, Stan Musial, Cary Grant. I began to think maybe we were in the wrong section...A gentleman moved into the aisle seat in the pew next to me. I introduced myself, and he humbly mentioned that he was the mayor of San Francisco, Joseph Alioto. The celebrities you recognized, but there were many more people you didn't know, people from all walks and levels of life from all over the United States.*

*It was near 10 am when the President and other dignitaries filed in. Then the Kennedy family. The Mass started, and suddenly Senator Ted Kennedy was speaking, and when his voice faltered, I found myself thinking, "Come on, Ted, come on. Everyone is with you." That was the emotional peak for me.*

## **The Train**

After the funeral, we rode buses from St. Patrick's to Penn Station.

*We got off the buses, into the bright TV lights that were to mark the trail to Arlington Cemetery.*



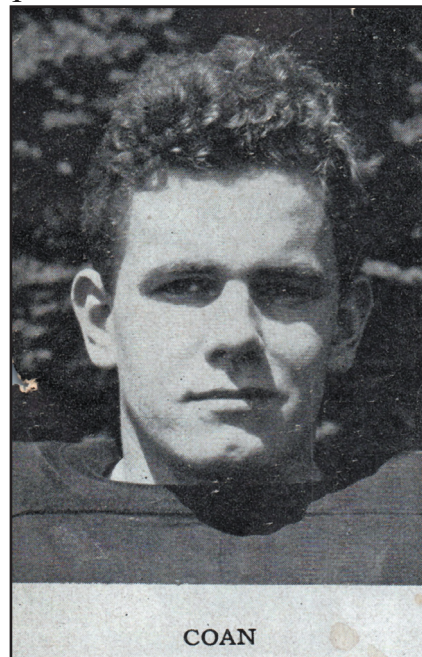
*“We saw you on TV!” my children told me later, “when you got on the train!” I sat with many of my old teammates: Dick Guidera, Ken O’Donnell, Sam Adams, Paul Lazzaro, and others.*

*I wondered, as I had since the telegram arrived, what would it be like to ride for five hours in a funeral procession? Will it be sad? What do people talk about? Will it be like old times when everyone got together? How will the same old stories sound when retold for the thousandth time? For the old days at the Varsity Club were a spawning ground for stories that will go on forever.*

Harvard athletes from all sports ate at the Varsity Club, and a dozen or so who “hardly could scrape twenty-five cents together,” as Kenny O’Donnell put it, lived in the double-room dorms upstairs. The club gave us token jobs to earn our keep—we took out the trash barrels once a month.

The team fed us during football season, but most of us had no meal plan and scrounged for our dinners the other six months of the year. Dick Guidera was one of the few from the Varsity Club who did have a meal plan at the Freshman Union hall next door, and we made the most of it. Three or four Dick Guideras showed up almost every day. “Go ahead in,” said the girls who checked off the students’ names, with a wink and a nod.

We turned the 4-slot toaster in the Union’s kitchen into a stove. We tied down the levers so the heaters stayed on, and cooked food and boiled water on it. It’s a wonder we didn’t burn the place down. I got a job at the Faculty Club, where I could get a meal, and my Aunt Elizabeth would slip me \$5 when she came for a football game, and I’d live on that for a week with dinners like 25-cent franks and beans



and the 40-cent pork chops and fries at Macarelli's restaurant in Somerville. My buddy and I would order two black coffees and split the cream to save a nickel.

Bob Kennedy lived in one of the nice homes on the Harvard campus, but he liked to hang out with us regular guys at the Varsity Club, guys who liked him and not just for his money. Paul Lazzaro may have said it best: "The Varsity Club—where Bob Kennedy learned about poverty."

Our team was part of the last leather helmet group—guys who played before helmets were made out of plastic. I rode the bench for the first part of the 1945 season but got my chance when a lineman went down with an injury. I played well enough to start every game the rest of the year and became the youngest player ever to start a Harvard-Yale game. I realized later on that was because 1945 was the first year freshmen were allowed to play.

My favorite play in the Yale game: a man with a good name for an offensive lineman—Fritz Barzilauskas—lined up against me. He was 25 years old, 6 feet 1, 225 pounds. I found out later that he was just back from Germany where he spent eight months in a Nazi prison camp after his bomber had been shot down, and a first-round pick in the NFL the following year. I landed my forearm under his chin and pushed him back. His nostrils flared as he screamed, "You sonofabitch!" That's the highest praise he could have given me, and I felt good going back to the huddle.

My mom and sister Connie saw all my games; my father (from 1945 on) and my brother and sister, Dick and Mary came to most, along with different aunts and uncles on different weeks. After the 1945 Yale game, my Father and Uncle Joe were hanging around the field house waiting for me and spotted Joe Kennedy. "Hello, I'm Joe Coan," my uncle said, "and I'd like you to meet my brother, John."

"I'm glad to meet you both," Mr. Kennedy said.

While the train glided toward Washington, my teammates and I laughed as we told our stories, often with some new embellishments.

*But there was always something different. We weren't crying. There were no long faces. But there was a feeling somewhere down in your stomach. It wasn't like the butterflies you used to get waiting out there for the kickoff. They went away as soon as the whistle blew. But this feeling didn't. It stayed on. And it's still there.*

### **“The People”**

We stared out the windows of the train at the throngs of mourners, more black than white, who lined the railroad tracks six people deep for 250 miles through New Jersey, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington. The crowds forced the train to slow down, which added three extra hours to the trip.

*The real purpose of Robert Kennedy's life came into full meaning on this train ride: the people. Thousands of faces lined the way. Saluting. Waving. With flags. With homemade signs. Kneeling-praying.*

*Cars pulled over on the New Jersey Turnpike to watch, and police officers saluted. A Newark Fire Department boat, the John F. Kennedy, pulled alongside the train, the firefighters standing at attention and saluting. Little league teams lined up along the baselines with their hats over their hearts. Soldiers, Boy Scouts...unending. And whenever the ride seemed tiring or the car got hot, one look out the window was inspiring.*

### **“I'm Joe Kennedy”**

The summer heat, TV lights, and extra-long ride strained the train's air conditioning, which broke down in several of the train cars. Toward the end of the trip, Bob's family made their way through the entire train to express their appreciation to all

the guests.

*None of us will forget the young man coming up to each of us with his hand out saying, "I'm Joe Kennedy," and he looked just like his father, the hair, the smile, and the courage.*

*And later when everyone in the other end of the car began standing slowly, putting on their coats, buttoning their collars, and straightening their ties, Ethel Kennedy was coming through with a word to everyone.*

She was led in by Rosey Grier, the former all-pro football player, one of the Los Angeles Rams' "Fearsome Foursome" defensive lineman, Bob's friend and unofficial bodyguard. He had helped wrestle Bob's assassin, Sirhan Sirhan, to the ground and wrenched the gun from his hand. I was honored to shake Rosey's hand, and thought, 'Thank God Grier didn't play for Yale.'

I don't remember what I said to Ethel Kennedy. What do you say to someone so recently widowed?

*I think I stammered my name, and afterward thought how I would have liked to have told her that my wife, who is also expecting, was praying for her continually.*

At last, after eight hours on the train, we arrived in Washington and boarded buses for Arlington Cemetery.

*I caught a glimpse of the three-year-old son of Robert Kennedy (through the legs of a Secret Service man) blowing on his candle innocently as if it were a birthday party. There was a lip-biting moment when the strains of the Battle Hymn of the Republic blew across the Potomac from the Lincoln Memorial.*



*And later, as the ceremony was closing, I went back for a moment to view John Kennedy's grave nearby. Mrs. Kennedy, Caroline and John Jr. had slipped over to lay a flower on each of the three flat stones lying there. It was difficult to watch, but I had to.*

## **Band of Brothers**

After the ceremony, we were on our own. My teammate, Vinnie Moravec, had his company's suite at a hotel and let a group of us sleep on the couches and the floor. The football stories continued.

After my freshman year, I turned 18 and enlisted into the Army. I missed the 1946 and 1947 football seasons serving in Japan, and when I returned in 1948, Bob Kennedy had moved on to law school, and Arthur Valpey from Michigan (the 1947 Rose Bowl champions) became the new coach. Coach Valpey favored the younger players. I impressed him enough in Spring practice to make the starting team.

Dartmouth, 1948. The test of strength—me against the quarterback. I grabbed his throwing arm; he fought to get loose. Fumble! A strip sack. I played 58 minutes on both sides of the ball with two sacks. Best game of my career, even though we lost, 14-7.

Besides playing on both the offensive and defensive lines, I liked punt coverage. As a lineman, you're taught to wait until you hear the ball kicked before running downfield. But I played in the middle of the line, and if no one lined up against me, I could leave a little early and get a better shot at the punt returner like I did against Army, the #3 team in the country.

I still remember the wide-eyed panicked look on the Army punt returner's face as I closed in on him. He was running a crisscross pattern with another return man, and I didn't know who was going to take the ball, so I had to slow down. I couldn't nail him like I wanted, but I got him. We were tied 7-7 at halftime, but they beat us

20-7 with two fourth-quarter touchdowns.

We won four and lost four on the season, but we beat Yale, which made it a successful year.

I worked hard during the offseason and reported to the first fall practice of 1949 at a lean 191 pounds. I made a tackle in a scrimmage and felt an electric shock through my knee. If that happened today, I would have laparoscopic surgery and get back on the field in a few weeks. In 1949, the team doctor taped it up, and I kept practicing, making it worse.

It seemed like the entire team suffered some kind of injury in our opening game against Stanford, including our captain, Howard Houston. I aggravated my knee. We lost 44-0. Howard couldn't play the next week against Columbia, and the coaches named me captain for the game. I relished the honor, but unfortunately, my knee gave out again on a punt return in the second quarter. We lost, 14-7.

I could run straight ahead on my knee with no problem, but football requires cutting side-to-side, and I missed the next six games. We lost five of them. When I finally played again against Brown, I drove my plastic helmet—this was the year we switched from leather to plastic—into a lineman's huge belly to block him, and broke the helmet. My head was fine, but my knee buckled again.

The next week, the last game of the season against Yale, my knee kept me out of play. I shivered on the sideline until the very end of the game, when the coach turned to me and barked, "Coan, get in there for the kickoff." In those years, you had to play in the game against Yale to earn your varsity letter.

*Do I have to go in?* I thought to myself. Yes, I have to go. I threw my body to block a Yale player barreling down the field. He dodged, and I tripped him. I wanted to hide in the bottom of the tackle pile, but I was out in the open field. We lost the game, 29-6.

I had come into fall practice in the best shape of my life and with high expectations for a good season, but I was so psychologically devastated over my damn knee that I didn't even care about getting a letter. I didn't handle it well at the time, but I learned a valuable life lesson for the future: things won't always work out the way you plan them. There will be times when I work hard for something but get knocked on my ass. Standing around moping won't help any; I have to get back up and keep giving my best.

And nothing can diminish the life-long camaraderie with my football teammates and the guys from the Varsity Club. We became a sort of band of brothers, and our friendships kept going long after Bob's funeral train stopped in Washington. Jane and I often celebrated New Year's Eves together with some of my teammates and their wives. For nearly 30 straight years a larger group got together at Harvard for a football game. I was co-chair with Jim Kenary for the last ten years we met; the streak ended only because of the stark reality that not many of us are still around. After we stopped meeting, we emptied our reunion fund account and donated a granite bench to Harvard and dedicated it to the players and managers of the 1945-51 era. You can still sit on it today, right between the stadium where we played and the



Friday evening: President Summers accepts honorary doctorate in Leather Helmet Football from Jim Kenary and John Coan.

fieldhouse where we practiced.

**“Just write down what happened and turn it in”**

Before heading home Sunday morning, I returned to Bob’s grave. The day before, the crowds squeezed together elbow to elbow. On this morning, I paid my final respects with no one else in sight. I stopped at a coffee shop before heading to the airport. The customers in the coffee shop were as diverse as the crowds I had seen riding in on the train. My blood boiled when the clerk behind the counter refused to serve the black customers in order. *This is what Bob died trying to prevent.*



*Jack on the bench that Varsity Club alumni donated to Harvard “In honor of the men who played football for Harvard immediately after World War II” (2018 photo)*

On the flight back to Boston I sat next to a reporter from The *Boston Globe*, where I also worked, in advertising and promotion, not as a reporter.

“I feel like I ought to write something down,” I told him.

“Just write down what happened and turn it in,” he suggested.

After we landed, before I went home, I stopped at my office and sat down at a typewriter while all the events were still fresh in my mind. The *Globe* published my piece the next day pretty much the way I wrote it.

When our eighth child was born in November, we named him Stephen Robert.



### Who Knew?

No one knew my mom was pregnant until my dad wrote the article for *The Globe* and announced it to the whole world. It caught my grandmother a little bit by surprise! Another funny coincidence is that my wife Jen was born on June 10, 1968, the exact same day my dad wrote the article and the day before it was published.

Stephen Robert Coan

# A telegram and a train ride . . . JOHN T. COAN JR.

The ride home Friday night was typical, lots of traffic but . . . I was late . . . and the radio had the news and comments of the assassination. It was about 6:30 when I reached home, and my 11-year-old daughter, Julia, greeted me at the driveway with a cryptic comment . . . "Mommy's got something to tell you."

This sounded like trouble, so I pried a little and Julia was trying to tell me (I think the rest of the kids in the neighborhood already knew) . . . "You've gotten a telegram inviting you to the funeral tomorrow."

It had come at 4:40 p.m., and my wife Jane had been busy trying to get things together so I could get out as soon as I got home.

The telegram spelled in detail:

"You are invited to attend a Requiem Mass in memory of Robert Francis Kennedy at St. Patrick's Cathedral . . . You are welcome to travel on the Funeral Train from New York to Washington . . . This telegram must be presented for identification whenever it is requested."

## THE KENNEDY FAMILY

I was quickly off to the airport. Got the last shuttle, and met Hal Moffie, a classmate of the airport . . . bound for the same destination. Knowing conversation would be difficult, we both headed for the newsstand, for something to read on the way. The plane ride and the long train ride ahead I felt a quiet look might be nice to have along. Selections were limited, but the dream was easy. "Strength to Love" by Martin Luther King jumped right off the shelf at me. It fit me very well, and though I didn't know it then . . . it was to stay there for most of the next 36 hours. Over in New York, Hal and I had different buses on our way to the usual "see you tomorrow" comment, but we knew it wouldn't be usual.

Checked in at 11:30 . . . turned on the TV and was immediately in St. Patrick's viewing the curtain electronically . . . and then the camera faded to the bronze doors the crowds in the streets as familiar to everyone I had to go over there. I walked a couple of blocks to Fifth Ave., and down to the Cathedral. Many police everywhere, very well organized and efficient, courteous, many seemed young.

Fifth Avenue at midnight is always busy and interesting but tonight it was very quiet . . . yet busier than ever . . . I didn't want to get in the line, but I did want to soak up the atmosphere, the feeling that I had been hearing so much about . . . the temple. Though Bob Kennedy had great appeal to old, young and very old. White and colored. Many babies and youngsters one and two years old. I thought I would like to have taken my older ones down, before the telegram had really had time to make a decision on the invitation. The telegram solved that problem.

I walked around the Cathedral, over to Park av. where the line snaked from 31st to 47th and back up. Met a fellow headed home to the Bronx who had been in line for 6 hours from 5:30 when he got out of work till 11:30 . . . and he felt he had to put in that six hours as a "kind of person." On Lexington av., the line ended, but police harassment, everywhere . . . I headed back past St. Patrick's to the hotel now 2 a.m. The TV set was on, bringing me back to St. Patrick's.

I dozed off, but couldn't sleep . . . kept waking up to see the scene at St. Patrick's. I remember seeing Ethel kneeling at the altar. The line had been closed off . . . and the next time I awoke the set was on but now with a still picture of Robert Kennedy looking at me. Dozed off again . . . finally woke at 7.

I headed towards the Cathedral. Wondered about the hours ahead the Mass. I had hardly left the TV for three days back in 1963 . . . and now wondered what would it be like to be there in person . . . and the thought of a long train ride 4 hours . . .

The telegram was my admission, carefully checked to go into and official. And on the steps of the Cathedral I met familiar faces . . . Clio O'Donnell, Jim Norman and "Chief" Quinlan. There were a few minutes of waiting and the over present TV cameras were there. How do you greet old friends at such an occasion? You have the feeling that it is as if you had been there all along. But now? In a few minutes we were inside, the telegram again checked and we were assigned to a section in the cathedral.

It was now about 9:20 and the church was a familiar place for I used to pray across the street. This morning it was different . . . many straining from pillar to column glass windows—bright light . . . everything

I met Bob Kennedy first in 1945, when we were both out for football at Harvard. I was 17, just out of high school, a civilian, and Bob was in the Navy. As I was in the service for the Fall seasons of 1946 and 1947 I did not have a chance to play with him in those years. When I returned in 1948, he had graduated.

Many around the Varsity Club knew him far better and more closely than I. But, I, like millions of others, felt close to him in our beliefs.

Although I work for the Globe in the advertising and promotion department, I am not a reporter. I had no assignment to write anything about the trip. I took no notes. I had seen no TV of the trip. I had read no newspapers since Friday afternoon. But when I got off the plane in Boston Sunday morning I had many thoughts I felt compelled to put down on paper while they were fresh. So I went directly to the Globe, sat down at a typewriter and wrote—JOHN T. COAN JR.



with TV cameras and TV's behind posts so that all could see. I happened to look at the nearby TV and there was Jim Kenary bigger than life. At 6 feet 4, he wasn't hard to spot on the picture.

At each place in the pew was a Mass book and small card with Bob's picture on one side and some quotations on the other. . . . "Dear God, please take care of him who tried to take care of yours," and then others from his remarks on the death of Martin Luther King Jr.

The pews filled steadily. Clio, Jim and I were together next to Fr. Walsh from B.C. I could see the left side of the altar before a priest intervened, and the closed circuit TV picked up the rest. The pew in front filled with three Negro men and a woman . . . Eschta Kutt.

There were familiar faces all around . . . you didn't know them personally, but had seen them in the newspapers and TV. Sidney Poitier, Stan Muller, Cary Grant II began to think maybe we were in the wrong section, but it didn't matter.

The organization in the Cathedral was typically Kennedy, smooth as was the whole event. The entire campaign organization had been switched instantly into a funeral operation, and I could help but think the Kennedys have had no much experience at that. A gentleman moved into the aisle seat in the pew next to me. I introduced myself and he humbly mentioned he was the mayor of San Francisco, Joseph Alioto.

The whole trip was like that, filled with many faces you didn't know but from all walks and levels of life from all over the United States. The celebrities you recognized, but there were many more people you didn't know. It was like a President and other dignitaries filed in. Then the Kennedy family . . . which I saw better on the TV.

The Mass started and suddenly Senator Ted Kennedy was speaking. The silence and words sunk in, and when his words faltered I found myself thinking "Come on Ted, come on, everyone is with you."

That was the emotional peak for me, and the Mass went by quickly. And then on to the bus.

A pretty girl was at the bus door checking the telegrams once again. She was the kind of girl I had seen weeping in Los Angeles in the Ambassador Hotel just a few days before (via TV), but this time there was no Kennedy slain rector nor any straw hat.

At the buses went down Fifth Avenue, the crowds were there. It was just after 12 noon, and lunch hour for many. Down 14th Street and around to Pennsylvania Station, and my first glimpse of the New Madison Square Garden. I had heard a lot about the building, but my first entrance to it was anything but what I had expected.

At Penn Station, off the buses, into the bright lights of TV that were to make the trip to Arlington Cemetery.

Down into the bowels of Penn Station, a pause while the clergy went on ahead. They were dressed simply in black, all the bright robes of the Mass were gone.

Then on to the train, the telegrams were checked once again. Many familiar faces appeared. Dick Cavett had flown in from Minneapolis that morning and on the train

came Ken O'Donnell, Sam Adams, John Fintrentino, Nick Kari, Ernie Manning, Chuck Glynn, Paul Lazzard, Hal Moffie, Vince Moravec and others. I never did catch up to Dave Mazzone.

Just after 1, the train smoothly edged out of Penn Station, scheduled to arrive in Washington sometime around 5 p.m. A newsman had the train schedule, with the times due in at major stations. A few showmen were scheduled and I wondered, as I had since the telegram arrived . . .

"What will it be like to ride for five hours on a funeral procession?" Will it be sad? What do people think? Will it be like old times when everyone got together? Will it be the same old stories about when I was in the "thousandth time" for in the old days, the Varsity Club at Harvard was a spawning ground for stories that will go on forever.

Sure enough there were the old stories . . . some new embellishments. And there were memories of laughter. But there was always something different. We weren't crying. There were no long faces. But there was a feeling somewhere down in your stomach . . . I didn't like the butterflies you found to get waiting out there for the kick-off. They went away as soon as the whistle blew. But it's nothing didn't it stayed on. And it's still there.

The train pulled out of the Penn Station tunnel under the many steel girders out into the plains of New Jersey.

And there we met them for the first time.

The people.

The people.

I guess I had expected that it would be something like riding in a goldfish bowl. But it didn't sink in.

Cars were pulled over on the Jersey Turnpike. They still moving had their drivers looking at the train. Policemen saluting. Policemen not saluting. Policemen looking around their cars. And people. The real purpose of Robert Kennedy's life came into full meaning on the train ride. The people. They started along the tracks in Seasons, and ended in Washington, D.C. Some 250 miles. The train fell behind schedule. There was tragedy. Right alongside our car in fact. I heard the other train's whistle blow. It was going fast. There were gasps from our car . . . nobody really knew what had happened until later. But it was certain they were hit. Another sad note for the Kennedys.

But the people lined the way. Colored people. White people. I would guess they were two-thirds colored. There was 250 miles of people. The trip was long, three or four hours later. I was in the front position in some cars broke down. Some took their own off. Tim were in front. I gained a new respect for the working men, the reporters (I am not a writer. I work in the business end of the newspaper) hanging away on a portable typewriter balanced on railroad car cases. The TV cameras, men with their signs. A monitor TV taped to the top of the roof with the antenna pointed to the train windows. And big automobile batteries to keep it going.

Harry Weaver of CBS came in with cameras and the microphone lights. I thought I had just seen him two nights before on a show with Mr. Tim Kennedy. He was a regular of a piece of John Kennedy's, his place in Brooklyn. And here he is for real. He was around. I realize he's not there. He went into his talk with me earlier except

although I am sure he had prepared it. Just one take. A bit on the history of funeral trains. Maybe a minute or two. And no fluffs. The TV lights went off again. And back to the windows. People.

A Newark Fire Department boat pulled up below. Firemen saluting at attention. The name on the boat: "John F. Kennedy." It hurt.

It was to be like this for the rest of the trip. Reminiscing with old friends. Meeting new acquaintances. But always back to the thousands of faces outside who lined the way. Saluting. Waving. With flags. With homemade signs. Kneeling-praying. And it was hot out there. And the train was hot, then three hours later. But they stayed. Children. Men. Women.

Little League teams lined up along the base lines saluting with their hats over their chests. Soldiers. Boy Scouts . . . unending. And whenever the ride seemed tiring or the car got hot one look out the window was inspiring. And we knew these people had been there for several hours. But they stayed, and waved and saluted, and wept.

Through Baltimore and Washington, D.C. the crowds were the same, but larger. To me these people, lining the way were the real meaning of the trip. I had wondered how I could last four hours on a funeral train. But the eight hours went by fast, particularly whenever I looked out the window.

Of course, none of us will forget young man coming up to each of us with his hand out saying "I'm Joe Kennedy," and he looked just like his father, the hair, the smile . . . and the courage.

And later when everyone in the end of the car began standing slowly, putting on their coats, buttoning their collars, and straightening their ties, Ethel Kennedy was coming through with a word to everyone, led by Rosemary, 300 pounds of Los Angeles Rams tackle, and I thought "Thank God he didn't play for Yale." And she was just as lovely and gracious as she had appeared on TV. I had never met her before and was wondering "What can I say?" I don't remember, but I think I stammered my name, and afterwards thought how I would have liked to have told that my wife, who is similarly expiring, was praying for her constantly. And toward the end of the ride, Ted came through, naturally tired, I'm sure that everyone felt "Ted, you don't have to put yourself through this for us" . . . but he wanted in. I'm sure.

The train ride ended in Washington, there were more buses. The Court Lee Memorial on the Hill. My first view of the eternal flame . . . A up-biting moment when the strains of the Battle Hymn of the Republic blew across the Potomac from the Lincoln Memorial as we were waiting on the bus. A glimpse of the 3-year-old son of Robert Kennedy through the legs of a Secret Service man's bowing on his credit almost as if it were a birthday party.

Later, as the ceremony was closing, I went back for a moment to view the John Kennedy grave nearby. Mrs. Kennedy, Caroline and John had slipped over to lay a flower on each of the three flat stones lying there. It was difficult to watch, hard to be so

The telegram, the Mass, the train ride and now now. I had just met Bob Kennedy in 1946, and now until the train ride did I fully comprehend the real meaning of his life. The people.

I am sure that it is not the end, but just a beginning.



1945 Harvard Football Squad Picture