

BOBBY KENNEDY JUNE 6, 1968

BY HARRY ZIRKELBACH 06-04-2010

I am the son of two Democreats.

My mother told this story. She was 30 years of age before she learned you could be a Catholic, and not a Democrat. It was that ingrained. Dad was pragmatic. The better man was his candidate. Yes, that meant the Democrat from 1928 through the war years. But, he still felt impartial.

I came to Denver in 1948, registered to vote, participated as Democrat in the primary, became a Delegate to the city, county, and state conventions. Exciting times. Politicians were not exactly Average Joes, but approachable, capable of defending their ideas, without a toady phalanx of public relations men and women. Both parties too. Not all agreed, Dems, Reps, Ind., But discussions were without rancor, vitriol; usually plenty of humor, laughs, compromise. Individuals seemed ready to say, Let's play ball.

In the late 1952 and throughout the 1960 I knew every elected Official in Colorado. Not much different from the group of 1948.

Personable, dedicated, committed.

There were few issues that separated the parties by rancor.

Touches of humor sparked every meeting.

**Barry Goldwater began dividing the country.
The Vietnam War began dividing both parties.**

In 1968 my wife and I became advocates for Bobby Kennedy's pursuit of the Presidency. Colorado did not have a primary race then, and the goal, obtain delegates thru local, City and County conventions. Mundane, out of the headlines.

In spring of 1968 I had requested a two week Navy Reserve Training. This was approved and orders given to spend those 14 days at Quonset Point, Rhode Island. To complicate this, our family vacation was arranged. My wife and I drove to Pennsylvania in a VW bus, with the children. She remained with my Dad, other relatives and friends for those two weeks.

I went to Rhode Island.

There on Wednesday night, June 4, two days before meeting Barbara, I watched TV's California Primary results, which RFK won.

I retired at One in the morning. Next morning at breakfast, I learned Bobby had been shot, was near death. He died that day.

On Friday June 6 the final day of the Navy Training. I obtained a ride to Albany from a fellow Navy man, met Barbara. who had driven to Albany, stayed at a motel. We met, then drove to the McLean Virginia, home of Barbara's sister family.

They lived not far from RFK's home at Hickory Hill, Virginia. With our relatives, both families spent much of Sunday glued to TVs account of the Bobby's Funeral, the transportation of his body by train the Washington, then the evening burial at Arlington next to his brother.

The next morning, Monday, following the public Sunday funeral at St. Patrick's in New York, we attended 08:00 Catholic Mass at the McClain Church. A few parishioners arrived before us, and surprise, so had the entire Ethel Kennedy family, front pews right.

It was the ordinary daily Mass. Except, for Ethel and her children. And once more this reminder of yesterday Service at St. Patrick's in New York, Andy Williams had joined this family, sang "The Battle Hymn of the Republic.

**A moment to cherish,
reinforcement of a loss.**

**That day, this new beginning for these lives forever changed
in that Los Angeles hotel kitchen.**



In 1950 I became a Policeman. Quigg Newton was Mayor. We were a small crowd of 24,; he was gracious, smiled, shook hands, welcomed us, swore us to obey the laws of the City, State, Nation. Then a harangue. If anyone delved into Politics in any way, they would be fired. I don't know where that came from., but he seemed clear. I obeyed.

**I left the Police in 1955. And as a Navy Reservist I stayed clear of Politics.
Not so, Barbara my wife.**

Our host, my brother-in-law, Harry Schnibbe was more than a neighbor to Bobby Kennedy, he was also friend. In addition the Senator's Administrative Assistant., Joe Dolan, Was a New York friend of many years. Both were born and raised in New York City, were enormously talented. Both had lived in Colorado in the 1950's, supporting different candidates. Harry Schnibbe migrated to Washington in 1958, as Assistant to Colorado Senator John Carroll. In the early 1960s he had rejected an offer to join the RFK Attorney Generals' staff.

Meanwhile Joe Dolan had supported President Kennedy's 1960 Presidential bid, became friend to both Jack and Bobby . When JFK appointed his brother Attorney General, Joe Dolan became an Assistant Attorney General, as did Colorado's Whizzer White. Then Bobby was elected the Junior Senator from New York and Joe became Senator Bobby Kennedy's Administrative Assistant.

**On the Senator Robert Kennedy's death, Joe migrated back to Denver. A talented Lawyer, he was Governor Lamn's Director of Revenue,
later Director of Highway Department.**

Dolan left appointive offices in the 1980s, joined a Tuesday breakfast group of which I was a member. Joe's detailed memory was a constant source of remembrances of the politics of

Colorado and Washington political moments.