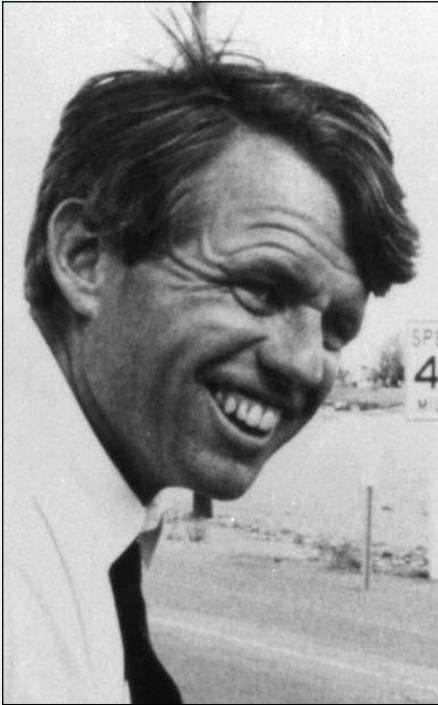


Robert F. Kennedy



Robert Kennedy was an extremely popular politician. As with many of the Kennedys, representing a specific ethnic unit of American politics, he had difficulty with the Jews, who were quite another entity on the American ethnic landscape. It was common knowledge in ruling circles that RFK and the remainder of the clan were privately anti-Zionist and suspicious of Jewish influence in American life, no matter their political liberalism.



Conveniently, RFK was told to make his way through the kitchen exit of the hotel rather than his usual custom of leaving through the crowd. Waiting for him was a hail of gunfire. There were more bullet holes in the walls of the kitchen than the number of bullets Sirhan Sirhan's gun could hold. Eyewitnesses claim that Sirhan's eyes appeared "glazed" as if he was "on drugs." There is ample reason to believe that RFK's murder was a conspiratorial "hit." On this issue's cover, the colorful illustration was made from a famous photograph of Bobby engulfed by a crowd. He had no fear of crowds as this image verifies. Why did Bobby deviate from his normal behavior that fateful day?



I Was There When Robert F. Kennedy Died

BY ANONYMOUS

Irish-American Robert F. Kennedy liked to wade—“movie star style”—through cheering crowds during his 1968 presidential campaign. However, the night he was shot, Kennedy suddenly and abruptly changed his traditional pattern and exited the ballroom where his adoring supporters were gathered and instead left through a rear door into an adjoining kitchen where one or more assassins lay in wait. Here’s a first-hand account of the events of that fateful evening that may explain why Kennedy inexplicably altered his long-time habit of greeting his admirers and walked into an ambush.

EDITOR’S INTRODUCTORY NOTE: *Although THE BARNES REVIEW (TBR) has a firm policy of declining writings by “anonymous” authors, we are making an exception in this case. The author of this remarkable article is well known (and has been) to the publisher and staff of TBR for many, many years—an individual of unquestioned integrity and well respected in a number of arenas outside the realm of political affairs. As such, we are very pleased to present this first-hand account of what this individual witnessed on June 5, 1968, when the author was a highly placed operative in the national presidential campaign of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy and was there on the scene at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles where Kennedy was mortally wounded by an assassin. Although Michael Collins Piper cited this witness in his book on the JFK assassination, Final Judgment (which included a chapter on Robert Kennedy’s murder), this is the first time ever that the full account has been published.*

In late May and early June of 1968 I was working with Sen. Robert F. Kennedy’s campaign in Oregon and California in his bid to become the Democratic nominee for president. I was on the staff of Bill Wilson, the New York and Hollywood producer, who handled production for the campaign. Wilson’s headquarters was set up at the Chateau Marmont on Sunset Boulevard. There was a large suite at the Chateau where contractors, subcontractors, and other production people met to plan strategy and discuss business. The campaign was in full swing with people working long hours, juggling multiple jobs, and doing whatever had to be done to keep production moving forward. There were vegetables, fruits, and snack foods always available but little time for meals.

Senator Kennedy had just returned from Oregon, where he campaigned to win over Oregon Democrats opposing Sen. Eugene McCarthy (D-Minn.). Reinvigorating himself after his speaking tour, RFK told reporters to turn off the cameras. He jumped into the cold Pacific and swam a good mile or so out to sea and back. Topnotch videotape producers such as Jack Cox and film producers such as Jerry Syms prepared clips for distribution to TV stations to be aired that evening. I was tasked to distribute videotape to different cities in Oregon. Timing was precise. I flew from LA to key Oregon cities including Medford, Salem, Eugene and Portland. By advance arrangement, personnel from the TV stations met me at the airport, collected the videotapes, and I hopped a plane on my way to another city. Everything went like clockwork and without a flaw.

When I arrived at campaign headquarters in LA the mood

was upbeat. Though McCarthy defeated Kennedy in Oregon the real prize was California and the campaign team felt invincible. They were on a roll and working well together. Everyone thought that if RFK could take California he would win the presidency. In fact some of the insiders were already making plans to take the campaign all the way and begin campaigning against Nixon immediately after California.

Now the momentum was on to take California. The producers completed their footage and then edited and re-edited until Bill and the campaign bigwigs were satisfied with the results. There was a film of RFK on the train and of RFK giving speeches throughout California. His charisma was contagious as the crowd hung onto his every word. Film and video didn't do him justice. Like a well-oiled machine, production kept rolling along. Finally the day arrived for the Democrats of California to vote for their nominee. The polls closed and the votes started coming in.

Everything was looking good for "Bobby." Though exhausted many people associated with production went to the Ambassador Hotel for the victory speech. The plans were to meet with RFK after his speech at "The Factory," a discotheque. After arriving at the Ambassador people were buzzing about RFK and how he had just saved his son's life. He and his son were at Hollywood producer John Frankenheimer's house in Malibu. RFK's son was caught in a rip tide and carried out to sea. Bobby dove in and rescued him. At the time we weren't sure which son he saved. But he achieved hero status and everyone was on a "high." What could possibly go wrong? A few people voiced their concern, afraid he might be assassinated like his brother. But no one wanted to think about that during this victory celebration.

Rooms on the fifth and sixth floors were used for the campaign. I was headed for an elevator to go to the Ambassador ballroom when I passed Ethel Kennedy, standing alone by the wall obviously pregnant, looking tired and tense. I caught up with the campaign's press secretary, Frank Mankiewicz, and some of his people. One of them asked me if I would sit with Bobby in a hotel room while he was interviewed by a local radio station prior to giving his speech. He said Bobby liked to be with other people, to have an audience when doing radio interviews. There were half a dozen of us who agreed to be the audience. All of the major networks except for NBC conceded victory for RFK. It bothered Bobby that NBC had not conceded. He was smoking a cigar and looking around at the people while the interviewer focused on that point. Along with other staffers I was seated close to Kennedy and the interviewer. In no time the interview was over.

We departed with RFK and while walking toward the elevators people were talking about how he would leave the Ambassador Hotel after the speech. RFK wanted to walk through the crowd rather than go out a back door. I was told he felt comfortable and safer doing that.

It made sense that he could do this when I saw that less than half the ballroom was filled with people. The ballroom could have been filled because there were many more people wanting to get in who were in the lobby and outside. When I asked why more people were not allowed in the ballroom I was told it was for "security" purposes. There were guards by the ballroom doors.

Bobby felt that it "looked good" (in televised media re-

ports) to have cheering crowds surrounding him in his moment of victory. In fact, during that campaign, it was almost a tradition that cheering RFK supporters would practically tear his shirt off in their enthusiasm, to the point that Bobby was known to wear inexpensive shirts with the expectation that they would eventually be torn and ruined by screaming admirers.

RFK gave a rousing victory speech and when he started to finally leave the ballroom, I was surprised to see him turn around and start walking through the kitchen door, even though I was sure that he would go out through the ballroom. Clearly someone or something influenced him to alter his normal procedure of going through the crowd. His decision to leave through the kitchen was alien to his nature.

I was standing close to the kitchen door but not close enough to see the actual shooting itself. There were hundreds of balloons floating around the ceiling. It sounded like the balloons were popping when I heard people saying there were gunshots. There were a lot of shots. A man standing close to me had blood on his face.

I looked around for the guards but they were standing by the doors, not making any move. I ran to the guard closest to me and told him that there were shots being fired. He told me that he thought I was trying to trick him into leaving his post so that I could let friends in from the lobby.

I tried to think of a way to convince him there was a problem. So I told him whether there were people shooting or not that many people believed there were gun shots and that there could be a stampede and people could get hurt. I insisted that he had better do something and check it out.

He finally moved. I went into the lobby area and told someone who looked like a hotel official to call an ambulance as there were people hurt. I went back into the ballroom. People were milling all around I worked my way through the crowd to a door that led through some offices into the kitchen. RFK was on the floor surrounded by his wife and others. The CBS cameraman fainted. Working with the grip, one of the producers grabbed the camera and kept filming everything going on in the kitchen. By this time he had completed seven trips to Vietnam as a film producer inventing most of the portable hand-held equipment used for filming in places such as Vietnam. He had worked for CBS at one time and knew this footage would be valuable and historical. He never stopped filming until RFK was taken away. There were five other people shot and bleeding.

The waiter brought ice and I helped get ice to the injured. The ambulance attendants finally got to RFK after what seemed to me like a long time. Surprisingly, the attendants plopped him in a wheelchair. I couldn't figure out why they would put any man with head injuries in a wheelchair and roll him out like that.

As they wheeled him out, his head and arms were so limp that it looked like all life was out of him. I couldn't see how he could survive. Later when I learned the doctors were still working with him at the hospital I was surprised he lived for as long as he did.

I walked back to the ballroom with others who had been in the kitchen. We saw sports legends Rosey Grier and Rafer Johnson walk out with Sirhan Sirhan between them. His eyes looked like they were rolling around in his head. It looked like he was on something, perhaps some sort of drug. He didn't look normal. It didn't look like he had his wits about him to shoot straight. In fact, in a lot of published evidence that has since

come out, there is good reason to believe that Sirhan was under some sort of “mind control”—either through drugs or hypnosis. Sirhan himself has said that he has no actual memory of being in the kitchen at the time Bobby was shot.

At the time, though, I heard people say Sirhan had a gun and was shooting but never got close enough to Kennedy to shoot him at point blank range. There seemed to be too many bullets going off at one time for one man to shoot six people.

Something wasn’t right in my mind or in the minds of others around me. A producer and I looked at the bullet holes in the frame around the door. There were too many bullet holes for one man to have fired, to have come from a single gun. Later with the final “official” analysis on RFK’s assassination it looked like a story to fit another cover up that didn’t make sense but would be fed to the American people as fact. It looked too much like another “magic bullet” that was purported to have been fired by Lee Harvey Oswald at JFK in Dallas.

Later, after events began to wind down, I remembered the strange incident where Frank Mankiewicz was insistent that Bobby leave through the kitchen, rather than the ballroom. I discreetly asked others who had campaigned with him for a long time if it made any sense that Bobby would leave through the kitchen rather than through his crowd of supporters and they all said RFK preferred to walk through a crowd after a speech. Neither at the time—nor for many years afterward—did I mention the incident that I witnessed, nor did I see any published accounts anywhere explaining why Bobby went through the kitchen.

However, some years ago, when Michael Collins Piper was writing his book, *Final Judgment*, about the JFK assassination, which also featured a chapter on Bobby’s assassination as well, people suggested to me that I tell Piper about the incident and he did describe it in his book when it was finally published. Later, I was very intrigued to learn, from Piper, that Mankiewicz had written an article for *Washingtonian* magazine, describing his last days with Bobby Kennedy. In that article Mankiewicz described how he had insisted that Bobby leave through the ballroom but that Bobby had said, instead, that he wanted to leave through the kitchen. That was not the conversation that I heard, nor, as I noted, was it consistent with Bobby’s previous pattern nor was it consistent with the pattern that had been witnessed by other longtime RFK campaign workers.

In his book, *Final Judgment*, Piper points out that Mankiewicz started his career as a public relations man for the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) of B’nai B’rith in Los Angeles—an interesting point since Piper’s book contends that Israeli intelligence played a part in the assassination of both President Kennedy and Senator Kennedy.

And now, adding fuel to the fire of Piper’s allegation, independent RFK assassination researcher Lisa Pease has come forth with evidence, for example, that a British national of Jewish origin, Michael Wien, who went by the name of “Michael Wayne,” was in the Ambassador ballroom before the shooting and seemed to have had advance knowledge of the impending assassination.

Later, after the shooting, there were allegations that Wien (or “Wayne”) was carrying what appeared to some to be a cardboard tube or some similar item and some people thought he had a gun concealed inside. Although the police apparently took



There was little doubt of the very high chance of success of an RFK presidential bid. RFK was a powerful speaker, had an excellent grasp of foreign policy and was able to hold audiences in his hands. His murder proved very convenient for the power elite.

Wien into custody for a brief period, Pease suggests that there are many more questions about Wien—and other suspicious individuals who were there that day—that remain unanswered.

Pease seems afraid to mention a possible Israeli or Zionist connection and has even excised previous references to the work of Piper from a republished version of one of her earlier-published essays on the Kennedy assassinations that appears in her new book (co-edited with James DiEugenio), *The Assassinations* (Los Angeles: Feral House, 2003). With good reason, she is evidently afraid of being tarred with the same smear of “anti-Semitism” that has been leveled at Piper. However, her revelations seem to confirm at least some of what Piper has written on the topic and certainly add new dimensions to what I personally witnessed that tragic day when Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated. ❖