

John Fitzgerald Kennedy, 35th President of the United States

By United Press International
On a bitterly cold and snowy day in January, 1961, when he was inaugurated 35th president of the United States, John Fitzgerald Kennedy sounded a call to action that in many ways summed up his own remarkable career.

"Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike," he said, "that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans—born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a cold and bitter peace." Kennedy was all these, and

he bore the torch of world leadership in a society where the old order was changing fast. On that January day, no man had ever flown in space. On that day Negroes in southern cities such as Jackson and Birmingham were not yet demonstrating. On that day the world

had not come consciously close to nuclear destruction as it did in the great Cuban crisis of 1962. "Sure it's a big job," Kennedy once said. "But I don't know anybody who can do it any better than I can. I'm going to be in it for four years.

It isn't going to be so bad. You've got time to think — and besides, the pay is good." He later found out — and conceded — that it was a bigger job than he originally believed. But it is most unlikely that he ever once wavered in the belief that no one could handle it as well as he could. To think otherwise would have been a negation of his whole life.

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Overseas, there was the ever-present threat posed by the Soviet Union, the troubles in Southeast Asia, and — over and over again — Cuba. The Kennedy had barely unpacked their bags in 1961 when the image of the bright young American President was tarnished by the ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion. The plan to land exiles in Cuba in an attempt to overthrow Fidel Castro was conceived in the Eisenhower administration, and executed by the Kennedy men.

The disaster—for which Kennedy accepted full responsibility—lay like a pall on the administration for months. But if April, 1961, was a fiasco, October, 1962, was an unprecedented triumph. The Cuban missile crisis was a test of all the skill and courage that Kennedy could command. By ordering a blockade but not sinking any ships, by talking softly but carrying the big stick of nuclear retaliation, he forced the Soviet Union to withdraw the missiles it had placed in Cuba and thereby scored one of the greatest Western triumphs of the cold war. Just as the Bay of Pigs was the low-water mark of the first years, the Cuban crisis was the high tide.

domestic efforts to the state of his later economic proposals marches which became so grave that the President called the movements a threat to public order. To counteract it he submitted a drastic program of civil rights legislation to Congress and used all his own personal influence to bring whites and Negroes together.

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The late President is shown in this 1960 picture at Hyannis Port, Mass., shortly after he was elected. Standing, left to right, are Mrs. Robert Kennedy; Stephen Smith and Mrs. Smith, a sister; the late President; Robert Kennedy; Mrs. Peter Lawford, another sister; and Lawford. Seated, left to right, are Mrs. R. Sargent Shriver, a sister; parents, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph P. Kennedy; Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy, and Edward Kennedy. (UPI)



President John F. Kennedy is shown here enjoying antics of little John Jr. during Veterans Day ceremonies at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia Aug. 11. They are in the process of leaving the cemetery (right) and heading to the limousine. (UPI)



A PT boat commander during World War II, President John F. Kennedy is shown at left wearing Navy Marine Corps medal for gallantry in action in pictures made in Boston in 1944, and in battle dress in undated picture in South Pacific. (UPI)

The presidency of John Fitzgerald Kennedy was born in the fierce pride of an Irish immigrant family. It was carefully nurtured in the training stages of a multi-millionaire father, and brought to fruition by the man himself through a career in the House and Senate and on the campaign trails of America.

In a manner, typical of his family, Kennedy started at the top in many things.

He was a product of Choate, Harvard and the London School of Economics. He produced his first book, "Why England Slept," in 1940 at the age of 23. On his second literary try in 1956, he won a Pulitzer Prize for his widely acclaimed "Profiles in Courage."

He also started at the top in politics. There was nothing up-from-the-precincts in his career. He started after the war by winning a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives from his native state of Massachusetts. After six years in the House he ran for the Senate. That year — 1952 — was a bad year for Democrats because of the Eisenhower landslide. But Kennedy defeated Henry Cabot Lodge, a scion of an old New England family whose Brahmin roots were so vastly different from those of the Kennedys.

Hero in War

Kennedy's World War II record became a national conversation piece. The saga of PT109, how Kennedy commanded a PT boat in the Solomons that was rammed by a Japanese destroyer, was celebrated in books, a motion picture and countless retelling by magazines, newspapers and television.

Kennedy coupled this illustrious background with a headlong drive for the presidency that has been seldom matched for vigor, tenacity and expense. But despite this, he barely made it to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

With the largest voter turnout in history, he defeated Vice President Richard M. Nixon in 1960 by scarcely 100,000 ballots. Kennedy's 34,227,096 popular votes gave him an Electoral College edge of 330 to 219 over Nixon, who got 34,108,546 popular votes.

Not many hours before Kennedy took office, the family patriarch, Joseph P. Kennedy, voiced deep satisfaction that one of his four sons had made it to the American pinnacle.

But the elder Kennedy, one of the wealthiest men of his time, knew his older son faced problems as no other president had confronted.

"He's got to be good from the very start," said Joe Kennedy to a friend. "Not only because of his youth, but because the world has reached a point where the American president can make damn few mistakes and get away with it. This means Jack must make a go of it right from the beginning — and it means he'll need all the support he can possibly get."

Kennedy entered office on a surge of towering personal popularity. The new President, his strikingly attractive wife, Jacqueline, and their children made one of the most appealing and photogenic families ever to occupy the White House.

Their styles, their tastes, their preferences in sports from touch football to waterskiing, swept the nation in a Jack-and-Jackie fad. Motion picture fan magazines dropped cinema screens for months and emblazoned their covers with alluring pictures of the First Lady in bathing suits, riding costumes and T-shirts.

Newspaper and feature writers, night club and television comedians, recording stars and composers combined to spread the doings of the Kennedys. A great cult of personality swept the nation. Not since the early days of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal did a president and those around him become such an object of interest to the entire nation.

Undisputed personal popularity did not protect Kennedy, however, from the lash of severe criticism that accompanied some of the efforts of his administration. Nor did it rub off on Congress to the extent that the lawmakers fell over themselves to get his programs passed.

In fact, his New Frontier legislative proposals were often embattled. His defeats in this

area sometimes were impressive, his victories frequently narrow. His great problems at the start were foreign policy and the domestic economy. In many ways both were later to be overshadowed by the Negro "revolution" of 1963 which confronted the nation with one of its gravest domestic crises since the Civil War.

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Born Near Boston

The man at the troubled U.S. helm through this vast sea of difficulty was born at his family's Brookline, Mass., home outside Boston May 29, 1917. He had an older brother, Joseph P. Kennedy Jr., who was killed in World War II. After John's birth, four girls, Rosemary, Kathleen, Eunice and Patricia, followed before the third son, Robert F. Kennedy, was born in 1925. He became attorney general in his brother's administration. After Robert, there was another girl, Jean, and then Edward F., the last of nine children, born in 1932. The youngest of the family continued the tradition of successful politics by being elected . . . senator from Massachusetts in 1962 at the age of 30.

After the war, Jack Kennedy dabbled in newspaper work, then decided to try for a Boston congressional seat being vacated by the incumbent. Only 29, he campaigned hard, talked pocketbook issues and won the nomination over a field of nine other Democrats. Running in a normally Democratic district, he easily defeated his Republican opponent in the election.

By 1948, Kennedy was beginning to seek statewide recognition with an eye to running against Sen. Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. in 1952. For the campaign against Lodge, he again relied on a personal political organization as he had done when he first ran for the House.

In that 1952 campaign, the entire Kennedy family of brothers and sisters and in-laws moved in to help with "coffee hours" and other political innovations. They were to be used again later in Kennedy's 1960 campaigns in state presidential primaries.

Lodge lost his Senate seat to Kennedy while President Eisenhower carried the state by more than 200,000 votes.

Marries Jacqueline

Kennedy was married Sept. 12, 1953, to Jacqueline Bouvier, then 23, at a fashionable wedding at Newport, R. I. Like Kennedy, she came from a wealthy New England Catholic family, although she had lived mostly in New York and Washington. A daughter, Caroline, was born in 1957; a son, John Jr., in 1960.

There were times when Kennedy's policies seemed as middle-of-the-road as those of his predecessor, Dwight D. Eisenhower. This was highly annoying to the advanced liberals of the party.

There were major administration accomplishments legislatively, but not one was gained without extensive effort and close margins. Relations with Congress were not helped when the Democrats scarcely held their own in the 1962 mid-term elections. Kennedy, however, derived comfort from the fact that the Democrats did not lose as many seats as usual for the party in power during an off-year election, but the net results showed the country still narrowly divided between the major parties.

During his early years the President devoted most of his



President and Mrs. John F. Kennedy and children, John Jr. and Caroline, are shown in a happy family portrait last April, after they attended private Easter Mass at the President's father's Palm Beach home. (UPI)



The late President John F. Kennedy is shown in this combo of pictures from his boyhood: left, at age 10, in football uniform of Dexter School in Brookline, Mass.; and right, at 8, shortly after he entered Dexter. (UPI)



President John F. Kennedy is shown in these pictures with his daughter, Caroline: carrying her and giant doll at plane in Hyannis Port, Mass., during 1960 campaign (at left); and going to visit Mrs. Kennedy at Otis Air Force Air Force Base Hospital last Aug. 11, after Mrs. Kennedy lost a prematurely born son. (UPI)