

This Day in History... November 20, 1925

Birth of Bobby Kennedy

Robert F. (Bobby) Kennedy was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on November 20, 1925. America's 64th attorney general, he was one of the youngest cabinet members in history, and is remembered for his dedication to civil rights and fighting against organized crime.

Bobby was the seventh of nine children born to Joe Kennedy Sr., a businessman and leading figure in the democratic party who hoped one of his sons would grow up to be president. While he focused on preparing Bobby's older brothers for such a feat, he encouraged the younger siblings to study current events so that they too could enter public service.

As a child, Bobby liked visiting historic sites and playing games that improved his vocabulary and math skills. He was very interested in American history, covering his walls with presidential portraits and his shelves with books on the Civil War. He was also an avid stamp collector and even received a personal letter from fellow collector, President Franklin Roosevelt.

Weeks before his 18th birthday, Bobby joined the US Naval Reserve and went on to attend the V-12 Navy College Training Program at Harvard. After his older brother Joe was killed in action in 1944, Bobby requested to be assigned to the ship that was named in his honor. Bobby served aboard the USS *Joseph P. Kennedy Jr.* for four months in the Caribbean before being honorably discharged.

Bobby went on to attend Harvard and join the varsity football team. After graduating, Bobby sailed to Europe and the Middle East and submitted stories for the *Boston Post*. In the following years, he passed the bar and continued to write for the *Boston Post*, notably covering the Treaty of Peace with Japan.

In 1951, Bobby followed his brother John's lead and entered politics as an attorney in the US Department of Justice. In 1953, he became counsel for the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, chaired by Senator Joseph McCarthy. Kennedy held that position for the next two years. He finished the 1950s as chief counsel to the Senate Select Committee on Improper Activities in the Labor-Management Field.

On RFK's 76th birthday in 2001, the Department of Justice building was renamed in his honor.

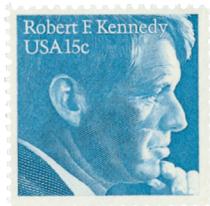


Beginning in 1959, Bobby began devoting his time to running his brother's presidential campaign, as he had done in 1952 during John's senatorial campaign. After John won the 1960 presidential election, Bobby was appointed attorney general and also acted as the president's closest advisor. These roles gave Bobby considerable influence in both foreign and domestic affairs. He had greater power as attorney general than anyone else who has held that position and used it to pursue leaders of organized crime and the mafia. During his term, convictions against these people rose 800 percent.

Bobby used his influence to push for civil rights reform. He supported the Freedom Riders and sent US marshals to enforce a federal court order to integrate the University of Mississippi. He remained in that office for a few months after his brother's assassination.

In 1965, following his term as attorney general, Bobby ran for a seat in the US Senate, representing New York State. After three years as a US Senator, sensing the vulnerability of Lyndon Johnson, Bobby decided to run for president of the United States. He was immensely popular, as people saw him as the embodiment of his slain brother.

Bobby won the California primary on June 4 and delivered his victory speech. Shortly after midnight on June 5, 1968, a Palestinian Jordanian immigrant named Sirhan Bishara Sirhan shot him. Bobby died on the morning of June 6, 1968, at just 43 years old.



Stamp features a family photo provided by Bobby's wife.

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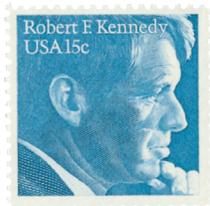


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