



# **The Early Years 1917 - 1940**

JFK at 100 presented by Kennedys and King | May 2017



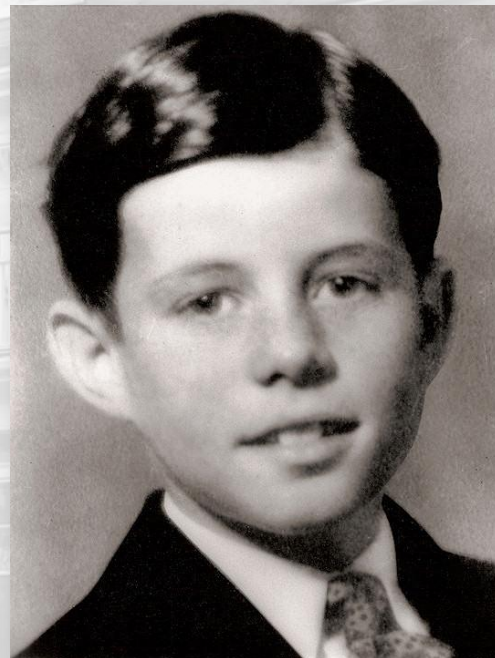
May 29, 1917: John Fitzgerald Kennedy is born in Brookline, Massachusetts, the second of nine children to banker Joseph Kennedy and his wife Rose Fitzgerald. Rose is the daughter of the former mayor of Boston, John F. Fitzgerald. Both the Kennedys and Fitzgeralds were Irish Catholics, and this heritage would have a strong impact on John Kennedy's political career.



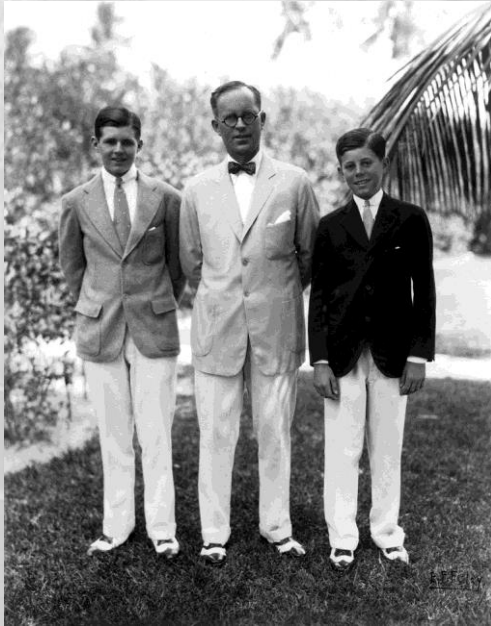
1919-20: John Kennedy undergoes various illnesses, including a serious case of scarlet fever. He is first confined to Boston City Hospital. He is so close to death, he is given the Last Rites. But he recovers and is then sent to a sanitarium in Maine.



1920: Joseph Kennedy prospers in the shipbuilding business and investment banking. He purchases an estate in Brookline at 51 Abbotsford Road.



1922: At age 5, John is promoted from kindergarten to first grade at Edward Devotion School.



1924-25: John follows older brother Joseph, Jr. to Noble and Greenough Lower School. This was a very upper crust school where Joe and Jack were taunted for being Irish Catholic and actually challenged in fights. When the owner of Noble and Greenough tries to sell the school, Joe Kennedy organizes a committee to buy it and they rename it the Dexter School the following year. In November 1925, Robert F. Kennedy is born.



1927: Joseph Kennedy enters the movie business. The family moves to Riverdale, in New York City. Kennedy attends Riverdale Country School, a private school for boys.



1929-31: The Kennedys move to Bronxville, a suburb of New York City. At age 13, John attends the Canterbury School in New Milford, Connecticut. He has an appendectomy in April of 1931 and recuperates at home.





JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY  
"Jack" "Ken"

294 Pondfield Road, Bronxville, N. Y.

Age: 17  
Height: 5 ft. 11 in.  
Weight: 155 lbs.

Number of years in School: 4

1931-32: League Football, League Basketball, League Baseball  
1932-33: League Football, Second Basketball Squad, Blue Basketball Team, Brief Board  
1933-34: Junior Football Team, Second Basketball Squad, Brief Board  
1934-35: Business Manager of the Brief, Golf Squad

*Harvard*

1931-35: Kennedy attends the Choate School in Wallingford, Connecticut for grades 9-12. Later, he's sent to Mayo Clinic and diagnosed with colitis. In June 1935, he graduates from Choate, voted "most likely to succeed."



1936-37: After a year of illnesses which required hospitalization, Kennedy enrolls at Harvard College. In July 1937, he takes a summer tour of Europe with his friend Lem Billings.



1939-40: In his junior and senior years, Kennedy improves his prior mediocre academic performance. His senior thesis evolved into the book *Why England Slept*. Joseph Kennedy enlists Henry Luce to write a foreword and columnist Arthur Krock to work with young Kennedy to re-draft the college thesis into a book.



1940: John F. Kennedy graduates from Harvard. *Why England Slept* is published and eventually sells 80,000 copies.



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# **From Harvard to Capitol Hill**

## **1940 - 1946**



1940-41: Kennedy takes classes in business law at Stanford. Later, he is hospitalized for weight loss and back problems in Boston. In May 1941, he tours South America to check on Nazi influence on the continent.

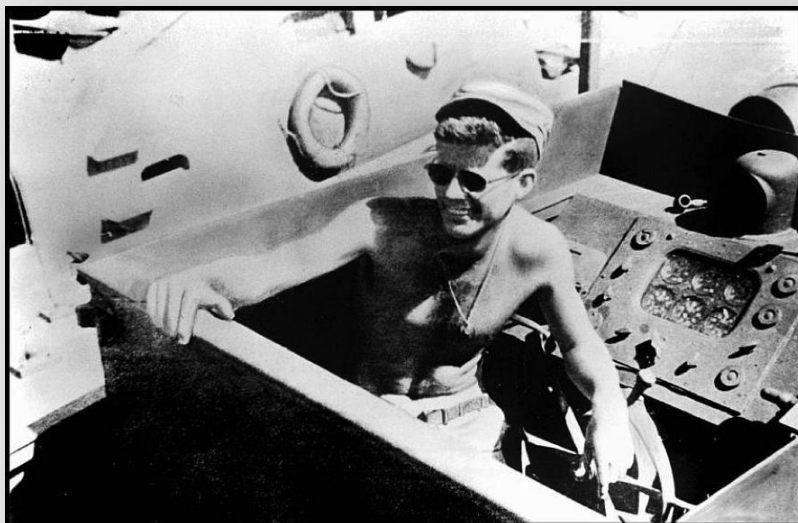


1941: After his brother Joseph, Jr. enlists in the Navy, JFK drops plans to go to Yale Law School and also enlists. His father pulls strings so he can get through the physical examination. In October 1941, he reports for duty at Office of Naval Intelligence in Washington, D.C.

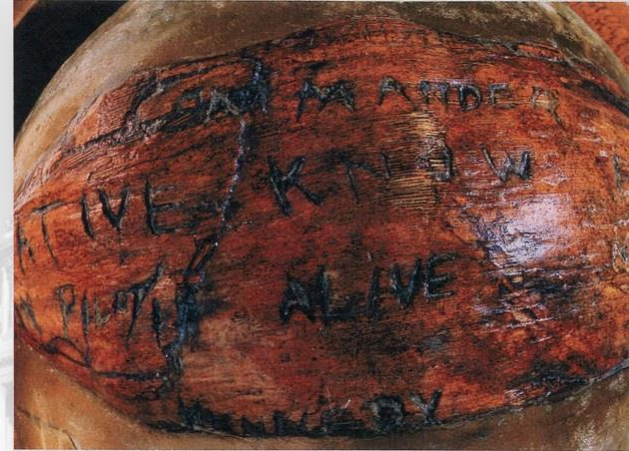


1942-43: Kennedy tires of working intelligence and applies for active duty. He attends officer training school at Northwestern University in Chicago. As a lieutenant, he trains in torpedo boats in Rhode Island and then commands PT 101 in Florida and at the Panama Canal.





1943: Kennedy is transferred to the Solomon Islands and takes command of PT 109. On August 2, at 2 am, PT 109 is rammed by the Japanese destroyer the *Amagiri*. PT 109 is set ablaze and cut in half. There is a dispute by the Japanese commanding officers whether or not the ramming was deliberate or accidental due to poor visibility. Two men died in the explosion.



August 3-8, 1943: Kennedy organized the ten survivors and tugged a wounded man four miles to Plum Pudding Island. It was barren, so they swam another mile to Olasana Island. They were rescued by two native Australian scouts who carried a message Kennedy carved in a coconut shell to the allied base at Rendova Island.



September-November 1943: Kennedy commands PT 59, which had been converted into a gunboat. He is relieved of command due to the diagnosis of a duodenal ulcer; he needs a cane to walk and weighs only 145 lbs. He is later awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal, and the Purple Heart.



May-December 1944: Kennedy is hospitalized at Chelsea Naval Hospital in Boston for a ruptured disc in his spine, but he also has abdominal pain and it is discovered he has malaria. He stays hospitalized until December 27, 1944.



August 12, 1944: Kennedy's older brother Joseph is killed over England when a drone plane full of explosives he is piloting blows up prematurely.



January-April 1945: Kennedy recuperates at the military rehab center in Castle Hot Springs, Arizona. He is formally discharged on March 1, 1945. In April, he reports on the founding meeting of the United Nations in San Francisco for the *Chicago Herald American*.



June-November 1945: Kennedy reports on the landslide defeat of Churchill by Clement Attlee. From London, he then flies to Ireland, Paris, and Germany, concluding with a visit to the Potsdam Conference. In November, Joseph Kennedy helps finance Democratic congressman Michael Curley's campaign for mayor of Boston. This clears the way for John Kennedy to campaign for Curley's congressional seat.



1946: On April 23, Kennedy files papers to run for Congress. His team includes military colleagues Torbert MacDonald and Red Fay, and political advisor Mark Dalton. On June 18, and with a campaign budget of around \$250,000, Kennedy defeats ten other candidates to win the Democratic primary by a large margin. He nearly doubles the vote total of the second-place finisher Mike Neville, former mayor of Cambridge. On November 5, and in a predominantly Democratic district, Kennedy easily defeats two other candidates in the general election, more than doubling their vote tally.



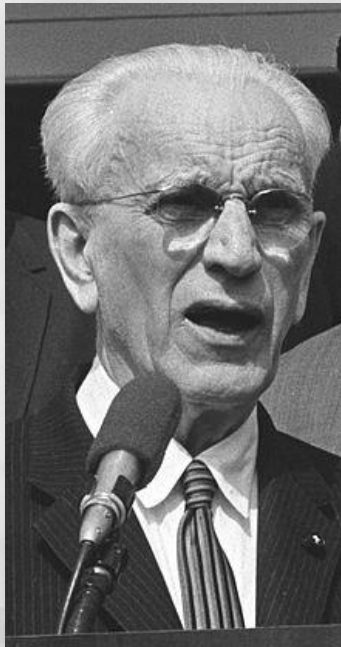


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**Kennedy in the House  
1946 - 1952**



November 1946: Kennedy moves to the Georgetown district in Washington, D.C., and leases a townhouse at 1528 31st Street, NW. His aide Billy Sutton and sister Eunice help him get organized and hire both a personal and office staff.



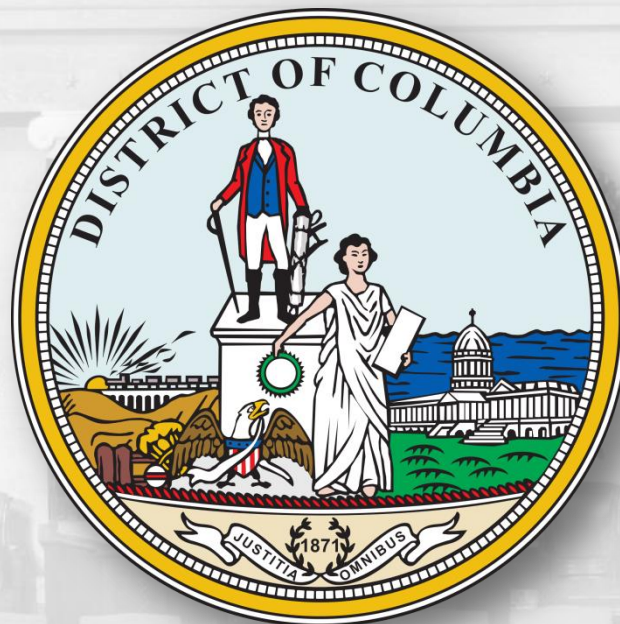
January 1947: House minority whip John McCormick appoints Kennedy to both the Education and Labor and the District of Columbia committees.



June-July 1947: Kennedy votes against final passage of the anti-union Taft-Hartley bill. He had previously voted against the Hartley bill when it originated in the House. In July, he speaks out against the GOP effort to table a bill creating long-term low interest loans for veterans to buy homes. He later accuses the American Legion of being in the pocket of the real estate lobby, and “not having a constructive thought for the benefit of the country since 1918.”



January-July 1949: Kennedy criticizes the Truman administration for insisting on a coalition government in China instead of solely backing the Nationalists. In July, with the signing of the Housing Act of 1949, Kennedy angrily complains that it should have never taken four years of debate to pass the bill.



March 3, 1950: Kennedy places a memorandum in the *Congressional Record* proposing home rule for Washington, D.C.



October-November 1951: Kennedy tours Indochina. In Saigon, he has a meeting with State Dept. official Edmund Gullion. He tells Kennedy France will not win the war since Ho Chi Minh had won the hearts and minds of Vietnamese youth. Bobby Kennedy says this meeting had “a very, very major” impact on JFK’s thinking.



November 14, 1951: In a letter to his voters, Kennedy condemns Dean Acheson's State Department for aiding the desperate effort of a French regime "to hang on to the remnants of empire."





April-November 1952: On April 7, 1952, JFK announces he will run for the senate seat of Henry Cabot Lodge. In November, Kennedy defeats Lodge with 51.5 % of the vote. He is appointed to the Labor and Public Welfare and Government Operations committees.



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**Kennedy in the Senate  
1953 - 1960**



May 1953: The new senator writes Sec. of State John Foster Dulles, asking him 44 questions about the future of American involvement in Indochina. Later, Kennedy presents his plan to revive the New England economy. It includes job retraining, a higher minimum wage, and low-cost energy plans. He will later propose over 300 bills to implement this plan.



September 12, 1953: Kennedy marries Jacqueline Bouvier in Newport, R.I.



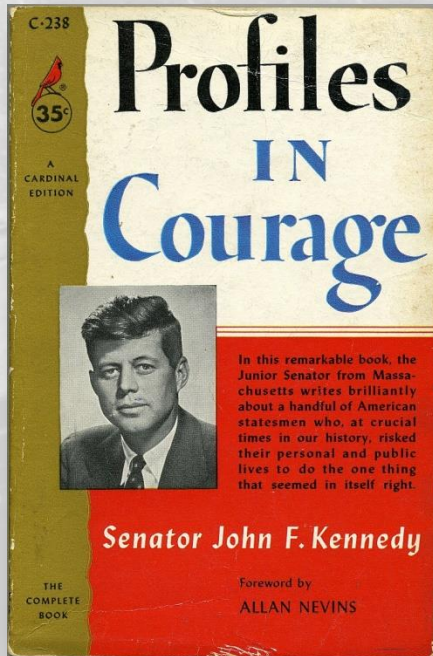
January-April 1954: Kennedy votes for the St. Lawrence Seaway project, a long series of canals to carry cargo from the Great Lakes area to the Atlantic Ocean. In April, and aware of the White House efforts to bail out the French garrison at Dien Bien Phu, Kennedy states that "...no amount of men and material can defeat an enemy who is everywhere and nowhere and has the support of the people."



May 7, 1954: After Eisenhower turns down Foster Dulles's plan to use atomic weapons, Dien Bien Phu falls. The Dulles brothers begin a giant CIA operation to create a government in Saigon to stop Ho Chi Minh from unifying the country.



May-September 1955: Kennedy returns to Washington after months of recuperation from a series of back surgeries in Boston. In September, he visits Poland and then writes a report; he later tries to set up cultural exchanges and even proposes grants in aid to the Russian satellite.



January-August 1956: With Ted Sorensen's research, Kennedy writes and publishes *Profiles in Courage*, a study of how eight senators took courageous stands that endangered their political careers. It sells 2 million copies and wins a Pulitzer Prize. In August in Chicago, presidential nominee Adlai Stevenson opens the vice presidency to a convention vote. After three ballots, Kennedy finishes second to Sen. Estes Kefauver.





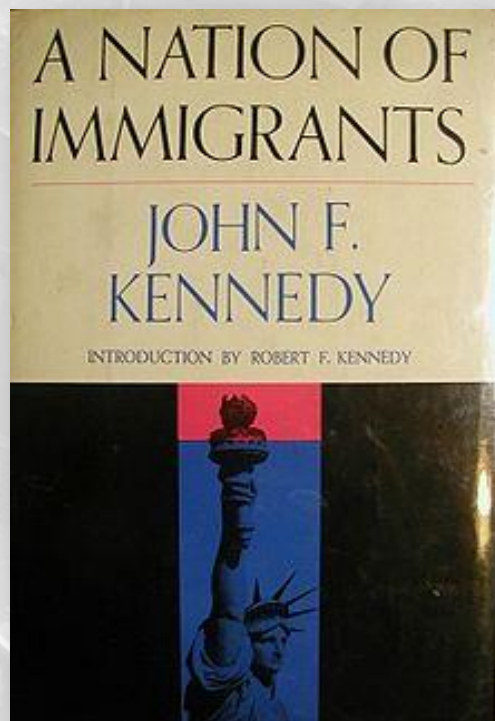
September 21, 1956: Kennedy makes a speech for Stevenson attacking both parties for failure to understand the forces of nationalism in the Third World. Stevenson wires him not to make any more speeches for his campaign.



January-July 1957: Kennedy is appointed to the McClellan Committee, which will investigate labor management relations and Mob influences in union activities. Chief Counsel RFK will begin his drive against Jimmy Hoffa and the Mafia from this post. In July, Kennedy makes a dramatic attack on the White House over America's refusal to force France out of the colonial war in Algeria. This speech elicited almost 140 editorial replies; over 60% were negative. But he now becomes a hero in Africa and France and a leading figure in foreign policy debates.



September 1957: Kennedy votes for the Civil Rights Act but is disappointed that Title 3, the part of the law which allowed the attorney general to enter states and file lawsuits, is dropped.



1958: Kennedy publishes the booklet *A Nation of Immigrants*, a powerful critique of the immigration quota system begun in 1921, which favored northern Europeans.



March 19, 1959: After three years of supervising research, Kennedy unveils wall portraits of five great senators: Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, Robert M. Lafollette, John Calhoun, and Robert Taft.



January-July 1960: Kennedy announces in the Senate Caucus Room that he will be a candidate for president. In July, after defeating Hubert Humphrey in the primaries, and Lyndon Johnson at the convention, Kennedy picks LBJ as his vice president and accepts the nomination.



August 2, 1960: Senator Kennedy gives a long and compelling speech in the Senate to again raise the minimum wage and expand its scope. This issue, plus unemployment insurance, preoccupied Kennedy in his senate years.



November 8, 1960: In one of the closest popular tallies ever, Kennedy defeats Vice President Richard Nixon by about 113,000 votes, but by a margin of 303-219 in the Electoral College.





December 30, 1960: JFK's civil rights advisor Harris Wofford submits his memorandum on how Kennedy should proceed in order to achieve civil rights for African Americans.



“Southeast Asia is an area of human conflict between civilizations striving to be born and those desperately trying to retain what they had held for so long; in which the fires of nationalism so long dormant have been kindled and are now ablaze. Here, colonialism is not a topic for tea-talk discussion; it is the daily fare of millions of men.”

John F. Kennedy  
November 14, 1951