

Collection #
P 0123

KATIE PALMER'S PHOTOGRAPHS OF ROBERT F. KENNEDY'S VISIT TO INDIANAPOLIS, 4 MAY 1968

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	5 color slides and 5 color prints made from the slides (housed in 1 half document case)
COLLECTION DATES:	4 May 1968 (prints made in 2006 from the original slides)
PROVENANCE:	Slides purchased from Michael Palmer, Indianapolis, in June 2006.
RESTRICTIONS:	None

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RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2006.0310

NOTES:

HISTORICAL SKETCH

Senator Robert Francis Kennedy (RFK) (1925–1968), a Democrat representing New York, declared his candidacy for President of the United States on 16 March 1968, four days after the New Hampshire primary, in the Senate Caucus Room of the Senate Office Building – the same room where his brother, John Fitzgerald Kennedy (1917) declared his candidacy for President eight years earlier. RFK said in his announcement that, “I do not run for the Presidency merely to oppose any man but to propose new policies. I am convinced that this country is on a perilous course and because I have such strong feelings about what must be done, I feel that I’m obliged to do all that I can.”

The reasons for the delay in his announcement, coming after the New Hampshire primary, were characterized by some as opportunistic and by others as politically shrewd. RFK flew to Indianapolis on 28 March 1968 to file as a candidate in the Indiana primary that was scheduled for 7 May 1968. The March 29th *Indianapolis News* headline stated “Bobby Makes It A Three-Way Race,” while the *Indianapolis Star*'s headline on the same date was “Bobby’s Entry In Race Called ‘Cutthroat’ Act.”

In April and early May of 1968, RFK made many campaign stops throughout the state of Indiana. On 4 April, RFK started his day in South Bend, where he gave a speech at the University of Notre Dame. Afterwards, he flew to Muncie to speak that afternoon at Ball State University. He was boarding a plane to fly to Indianapolis to open his campaign headquarters and give a speech at the Broadway Christian Center when he learned that Martin Luther King, Jr., had been shot in Memphis, Tennessee. When RFK landed in Indianapolis, he learned that King had died.

Indiana’s Democratic leaders opposed RFK’s candidacy, so his staff had arranged a campaign appearance in the heart of an African-American neighborhood in Indianapolis to solidify backing from black voters who valued his support for minorities and the disadvantaged. Because of the news of King’s assassination, city officials feared violence and unsuccessfully urged RFK to cancel his evening speech.

When RFK arrived at 17th Street and Broadway in Indianapolis, the festive crowd of about 2,500 had not yet heard of King’s death. Speaking from the back of a truck, RFK made the shocking announcement. That evening, as more than a hundred cities around the country erupted in violence in response to King’s assassination, RFK stood before a stunned and mostly African-American crowd, and made a moving personal appeal for a calm and peaceful response to the tragedy.

Other campaign trips that RFK made to Indiana include a visit to Indiana University in Bloomington on 24 April, a meeting with local Democrats in Indianapolis on 25 April, and with Indiana University medical students in Indianapolis on 26 April. He had a busy visit to Indianapolis on 30 April, when he made stops at Monument Circle,

the James Whitcomb Riley home, the RCA plant, the Christian Theological Seminary, the Marion County Home at Julietta, the United Auto Workers Local 933 office, the General Motors plant on South Tibbs Avenue, and the Hotel Sheridan-Lincoln.

RFK was still in Indianapolis on 1 May, visiting the City-County Building, the State Office Building, and a Ford Motor plant east of Indianapolis. He also had a meeting with Auto Workers Union retirees. In the afternoon he flew to Lafayette, Indiana, to meet with farmers and to speak at Purdue University. In the evening he flew to Anderson, Indiana, to visit the Delco-Remy Division of General Motors and attend a rally at Anderson High School. He spent the night in Indianapolis.

On 2 May, RFK had a noon luncheon with the Indianapolis Real Estate Board at the Howard Johnson Motor Lodge on West Washington Street, and afterwards visited a Chevrolet plant. In the afternoon he flew north to visit South Bend, Elkhart, and Mishawaka, before returning to Indianapolis for the night.

He toured more of Indiana on 3 May, flying to Greensburg in the morning, then going to Madison, Crawfordsville, East Chicago, and Terre Haute, before returning late that night to Indianapolis.

On 4 May, RFK attended a morning coffee with teachers at the Hotel Sheridan-Lincoln. He then visited several Indianapolis neighborhoods, scheduled as follows: King Avenue and Michigan Street at 11:15 a.m.; Speedway Shopping Center at 11:40 a.m.; Blake Street and Indiana Avenue at 12:05 p.m.; 21st and Harding streets at 11:30 a.m.; 26th and Harding streets at 11:37 a.m.; 27th Street and Northwestern Avenue at 1:00 p.m.; 22nd Street and Talbot Avenue at 1:10 p.m.; 39th and Illinois streets at 1:35 p.m., the Glendale Shopping Center at 2:30 p.m., the Meadows Shopping Center at 2:55 p.m.; the Eastgate Shopping Center at 3:25 p.m., and the Southern Plaza Shopping Center at 3:55 p.m.

A record number of 764,000 Democratic voters showed up at the polls for the Indiana primary. RFK received 42% of the vote, Governor Roger Branigin (a stand-in for Hubert Humphrey) received 31%, and Eugene McCarthy received 27%. RFK carried nine of Indiana's eleven Congressional districts and eleven of the state's twelve largest cities and towns. He won 90% of the black vote, and held his own in many of the white working-class precincts that had supported George Wallace in the 1964 Democratic primary. It was projected that RFK would get 55 of Indiana's 63 delegate votes on the first ballot at the Democratic National Convention.

That all changed less than a month later when RFK was assassinated. RFK was shot on 5 June in Los Angeles, California, just after addressing supporters at the Ambassador Hotel following his victory in the California primary. He died in the early morning hours of 6 June 1968.

Roosevelt "Rosey" Grier (b. 1932), a former professional football player, served as RFK's bodyguard during his 1968 campaign. Grier later appeared in movies and television programs.

Katherine "Katie" Palmer was a resident of Indianapolis in the neighborhood near 21st and Harding streets, where she took the photographs in this collection. She attended the rally with her young son, Michael Palmer.

Sources:

Anderson, David L. "Robert F. Kennedy Speech (April 4, 1968)." In *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*, edited by Bodenhamer, David J. and Robert G. Barrows. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994: 865. General Collection: F534 .I55 E4 1994

Boomhower, Ray. Indiana Historical Society. Personal communication, 2 October 2006.

Hill, James B. John F. Kennedy Library, Boston. Personal communication, 1 November 2006.

Mooney, Robert P. "Bobby's Entry In Race Called 'Cutthroat' Act." In *Indianapolis Star*, 29 March 1968, page 1.

Palmer, Michael. Personal communication, 7 June 2006.

Plotkin, Stephen. John F. Kennedy Library, Boston. Personal communication, 2 October 2006.

“Tarot Cards, Hoosier Style.” In *Time Magazine*, 17 May 1968 (<http://jcgi.pathfinder.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,838342,00.html>). Accessed 14 November 2006.

“War Continues: Kennedy.” In *Indianapolis Star*, 4 May 1968, page 19.

Ziegner, Edward. “Bobby Makes It a Three-Way Race.” In *Indianapolis News*, 29 March 1968, page 1.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists of five color slides of Senator Robert F. Kennedy’s presidential campaign stop near the intersection of 21st and Harding streets in Indianapolis on 4 May 1968, just three days before the Indiana primary. The slides were taken by Indianapolis resident Katherine “Katie” Palmer in her neighborhood. The slides are numbered 16 through 20, and show RFK’s campaign motorcade and RFK speaking to the gathered crowd and shaking hands. His bodyguard, Roosevelt “Rosey” Grier, is also shown. Also included in the collection are color prints made from these slides by the Indiana Historical Society photographer in 2006.

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CONTENTS

Five color prints showing Robert Kennedy, Roosevelt “Rosey” Grier, and crowds near the intersection of 21st and Harding streets in Indianapolis on 4 May 1968. Campaign motorcade (#16 and #17); RFK speaking to the crowd (#18 and #19); RFK shaking hands (#20). The back of Michael Palmer (in plaid shirt), son of the photographer, can be seen in the foreground of exposure #17 (original slides taken by Katherine “Katie” Palmer; prints made by IHS photographer in 2006 from the original slides).

Five original color slides showing Robert Kennedy, Roosevelt “Rosey” Grier, and crowds near the intersection of 21st and Harding streets in Indianapolis. Campaign motorcade (#16 and #17); RFK speaking to the crowd (#18 and #19); RFK shaking hands (#20). The back of Michael Palmer (in plaid shirt), son of the photographer, can be seen in the foreground of exposure #17 (photos by Katherine “Katie” Palmer, 4 May 1968).

CONTAINER

Color Photographs, Box
1, Folder 1

Color Photographs, Box
1, Folder 2

CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog: <http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, P 0123).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.