

Profiles in courage—I—

Adams gave up party, seat for principles

BY SEN. JOHN F. KENNEDY
The young senator from Massachusetts stirred restlessly in his chair as the debate droned on. The Senate chamber fairly echoed with the shouting of his Massachusetts colleague, Sen. Pickering, who was denouncing President Jefferson's trade embargo of 1807 for what seemed like the hundredth time.

Outside, a dreary January rain had bogged the village of Washington into a sea of mud. Sorting the mail which lay in disarray on his desk, John Quincy Adams found his eye caught by an anonymous letter. "Lucifer, son of the morning, how thou hast fallen! We hope not irretrievably. O Adams, remember who thou art. Return to Massachusetts! Return to thy country, assist not in its destruction! Consider the consequences. Awake—arouse in time. —A FEDERALIST."

A Federalist! Adams mused bitterly over the word. Was he not the son of John Adams, the last Federalist president?

Had he not served a Federalist administration in the diplomatic service abroad? Had he not been elected as a Federalist to the Massachusetts Legislature and then to the United States Senate?

Now simply because he had placed national interest before party and section, the Federalists had deserted him. John Quincy Adams was one of the great representatives of that extraordinary breed who have left a memorable imprint upon our government and our way of life.

Like the rocky New England countryside, he believed that a man was made in the image of God, and thus was equal to the extraordinary demands of self-government. A Puritan loved liberty and the law.

Long before these discouraging months in the Senate, when his mail was filled with abuse, he had noted in his diary the dangers that confronted a Puritan entering politics.

I feel strong temptation to plunge into political controversy, but . . . a politician in this country must be the man of a party. I would fain be the man of my whole country."

Born with advantages

FEW IF ANY AMERICANS have been born with the advantages of John Quincy Adams. A famous name; a brilliant father who labored unceasingly to develop his son's talents; an extraordinary mother. Yet he was gnawed constantly by a sense of inadequacy, of failure.

"Mamma has a troublesome task to keep me a studious. I am ashamed of myself." Again, 35 years later, having served as U. S. senator, Harvard professor, and American minister to major European powers, he could write in his diary:

"Two-thirds of a long life have passed, and I have done nothing to distinguish it by usefulness to my country and to mankind."

And finally, at 70, having distinguished himself as secretary of state, an independent president, and an eloquent member of Congress, he was to record soberly that his "whole life has been a succession of disappointments. I can scarcely recollect a single instance of success in anything that I ever undertook."

His frustrations and defeats in political office—as senator and president—were the inevitable result of his inexperience in ignoring the political facts of life.

Returns to Boston

IT WAS NOT UNNATURAL that John Quincy, returning to Boston after diplomatic service upon his father's defeat for president by Thomas Jefferson, should become active in his father's Federalist party.

But no sooner had the young diplomat been elected to the Massachusetts Legislature than he demonstrated his audacious disdain for narrow partisanship. Without consulting his senior colleagues he proposed that the Jeffersonian party be given proportional representation on the governor's council.

In subsequently selecting young Adams for the Senate, his colleagues in the State Legislature may have assumed that the honor would help impress upon him his obligations to his party.

Arriving in Washington, Adams promptly aroused a storm of controversy by becoming the only Federalist to support Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase. He regarded this remarkable feat, since it excluded Napoleon from our boundaries while enriching our nation, as far more important than the outraged astonishment of his party colleagues. This was regarded by his Federalist friends as the final proof of heresy.

With stubborn intellectual independence, Adams regarded every public measure that came before him, a fellow senator observed, as if it were an abstract proposition from Euclid, unfettered by consideration of political appeal. He denied the duty of elected representatives "to be misled by the will of their constituents," he refused to become what he termed a patriot by profession. . . . His guiding star was the principle of puritan statesmanship his father had laid down many years before. "The magistrate is the servant not of his own desires, not even of the people, but of his God."

Split develops

IN 1807, THE SPIT between party and senator became irreparable. Adams was denounced by the great majority of his constituents as well as the party chiefs. The final break, naturally enough, concerned the nation's foreign policy. Our relations with Great

and even the personal destruction of John Quincy Adams. Both houses immediately elected Adams' successor to the Senate—nine months prior to the expiration of his term. Adams resigned his seat. "It was out of the question," he wrote, to hold his seat "without exciting the most perfect freedom of agency, under the sale and exclusive control of my own sense of right."

"Do them over again" "I WILL ONLY admit that far from regretting any one of

Records of great men in our history

A new Congress is writing its record of party conflict and legislation. From these sessions, some congressmen will emerge with popular acclaim, others with disdain. But only history can give the final judgment—as history itself shows. Beginning here is a series of 10 "Profiles in Courage"—the records of great men in political life who, for the sake of what they believed to be right, sacrificed a great deal: Party, popularity, even their careers. The author is Sen. John F. Kennedy (D., Mass.), 38-year-old writer and newspaperman and a member of Congress since 1946. The articles are condensed from Kennedy's book, "Profiles in Courage," just published by Harper and Brothers.

Britain were worsening. Our ships were being seized, the cargoes confiscated, seamen "impressed" into the king's navy. Adams' patriotic instincts were aroused when the very Federalist merchants whose ships were being attacked decided that appeasement was the best answer to their problems.

With undisguised contempt, Adams in 1806 successfully introduced, over Federalist opposition, a series of resolutions condemning British aggression upon American ships. In the summer of 1807, the American frigate Chesapeake was fired upon off the Virginia capes by the British man-of-war Leopard. Adams was convinced the time for forceful action had come. He pleaded with Federalist officials to call a protest meeting in Boston. Turned down, he attended a Republican Party meeting and helped draft a fighting resolution pledging support to the president.

Now the Federalists outraged, stated publicly that Adams should "have his head taken off for apostasy. . . and should no longer be considered as having any communion with the party."

When, on Sept. 18, 1807, Jefferson called for an embargo in retaliation against the British—a measure apparently belonging to Massachusetts—Adams was chairman of the committee which reported out the bill. "This measure will cost you and me our seats," young Adams remarked to a colleague, but private interest must not be put in opposition to the public good.

Adams' social circles in Boston turned against him. "I would not sit at the same table with that renegade," remarked a leading citizen. A leading Federalist wrote while Adams was in the State Street at the usual hour but seems totally unknown."

The Federalist Legislature convened in May, 1808, with—As the Massachusetts Republican governor wrote, but one "principal object—the political

change of names The major parties in America are now known as the Republican and the Democratic. But it wasn't that way in John Quincy Adams' day. When Adams refers to the "Republican Party" he actually was referring to the party of Thomas Jefferson, the party of the "Whig Party" and, just before the Civil War, it blended into the "Republican Party" we now know.

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS . . . A famous name in politics

those acts for which I have suffered I would do them over again . . . at the hazard of 10 times as much slander, unpopularity and displacement."

Adams' star was to rise again—but with this incident he etched his profile in courage. And he never abandoned his courage of conscience. Soon after his retirement from the White House in 1829, he was asked by the voters of Plymouth district to represent them in Congress. He agreed only if he could pursue a course independent of the party and voters.

He was overwhelmingly elected, and devoted his prestige and energies to the struggle against slavery in Congress. To be returned on this independent basis to the congress from which he had departed so ignominiously 22 years earlier was deeply moving for Adams. "I am a member-elect of the 22nd Congress," he recorded in his diary. "No election or appointment conferred upon me ever gave me so much pleasure. My election as president of the United States was not half so gratifying to my inmost soul."—(C).

Next: Webster Coming Thursday in The Birmingham News Doublet Webster, the orator

Here are rules in contest

Read today, in The Birmingham News, the story of John Quincy Adams. This is the first in a series, condensed from the book, "Profiles in Courage" by Sen. John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts. This series will run twice weekly on Tuesdays and Thursdays, for five weeks.

THIS INSTALLMENT today also marks the start of a new contest for Alabama's junior and senior high school students. One contest for white schools of the state, and another for Negro schools.

Students may write a paper, not to exceed 500 words, on "An American of Courage." This must be a different person than those to be portrayed (in the series) will be John Quincy Adams, Daniel Webster, Thomas Hart Benton, Sam Houston, Edmund G. Ross, Lucius Lamar, George W. Norris, Robert A. Taft, and Andrew Johnson), and can be a well known, or little known personality, but must be one who has shown political courage.

Or, students may make a scrapbook of clippings of the series, or both. For the white contest, the state will be divided into two parts, Jefferson County to be one part and the remaining counties the second part. Negro contestants will compete from the state as a whole.

SCHOOLS SHOULD enroll with "Profiles in Courage" Contest Editor, The Birmingham News, Birmingham 2, Ala., by returning a "Entry Blank" which was mailed to all eligible schools, or simply writing that the school wishes to participate. Brochures, giving complete information on the contest will be mailed as soon as enrollment is received.

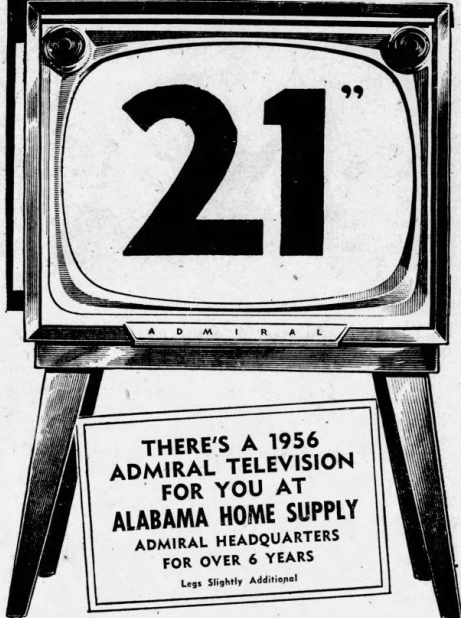
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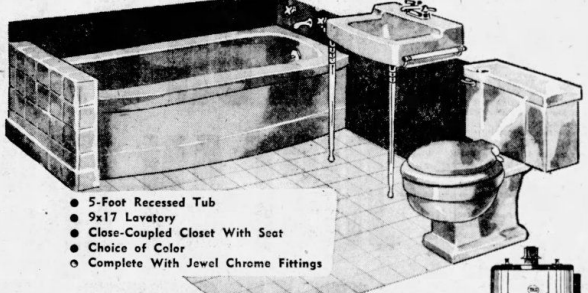
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