EDWARD M. KENNEDY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewer’s Briefing Materials
Lee Fentress Interview, 10/16/2009

Robert A. Martin, Research Director

**Miller Center Documents**
- Lee Fentress Timeline.
- Lee Fentress Fact Sheet.

**Secondary Source Materials**
- “Courting Power; Advantage In: For the Politically Inclined, the Name of the Game is Social Tennis,” *The Washington Post*, 07/14/1982.

**Oral History Interviews**
- Phil Caper interview, Kennedy Oral History Project, Miller Center, University of Virginia, 03/20/2007.
- Tim Hanan interview, Kennedy Oral History Project, Miller Center, University of Virginia, 05/07/2009.
- Nick Littlefield interview, Kennedy Oral History Project, Miller Center, University of Virginia, 05/03/2008, 02/14/2009.

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1 These are original documents created by Miller Center researchers for the Edward M. Kennedy Oral History Project. Please acknowledge credit for any use of these materials.
• Edmund and Doris Reggie interview, Kennedy Oral History Project, Miller Center, University of Virginia, 08/12/2005, 12/16/2008.
• Ted Sorensen interview, Kennedy Oral History Project, Miller Center, University of Virginia, 05/19/2005.
• Charles Tretter interview, Kennedy Oral History Project, Miller Center, University of Virginia, 08/08/2005.
• John Warner interview, Kennedy Oral History Project, Miller Center, University of Virginia, 05/06/2009.
A. Lee Fentress Timeline
Prepared by Bryan Craig
Miller Center, University of Virginia, 10/06/2009

1959
June
Edward M. Kennedy (EMK) graduates from the University of Virginia Law School.

1962
Lee Fentress helps Tulane University win the Southeastern Conference tennis championship. He goes on to play national tournaments and is nationally ranked. (http://tulanegreenwave.cstv.com/sports/m-tennis/archive)

November
EMK is elected to the U.S. Senate.

1966
Fentress graduates from the University of Virginia Law School and becomes an Assistant U.S. Attorney in the District of Columbia. Fentress first meets Robert F. Kennedy (RFK) when, one day out of the blue, RFK calls the former All-American to ask Fentress to play tennis. (The Washington Post, 07/14/1982; Boston Magazine, April 2009)

1968
March
RFK announces he is running for president. Fentress immediately resigns his position as an Assistant U.S. Attorney and joins the campaign as an advance man. Fentress is sent to Indiana and New Mexico, and meets with EMK’s future father-in-law, Judge Edmund Reggie, in New Orleans with Charles Tretter. It is through the campaign that Fentress first meets EMK. (The Washington Post, 07/14/1982; Boston Magazine, April 2009)

June
RFK is assassinated in Los Angeles, California.

1971
Fentress joins classmate Frank Craighill at a sports-oriented law firm based in Washington, D.C. The firm creates Pro Services Inc. (ProServ) a sports marketing company four years later. (The Washington Post, 11/09/1986)

November
Fentress participates in a tennis benefit at Ethel Kennedy’s house at Hickory Hill. Fentress loses to Ethel Kennedy and Davis Cup player Stan Smith. (The Washington Post, 11/12/1971)

1972
August
Fentress helps the Kennedy family with the first annual Robert F. Kennedy Pro-Celebrity Tennis tournament to raise money for the RFK Memorial. (The Washington Post, 08/28/1972)
1980

**August** EMK withdraws his bid for the presidency in a powerful speech to the Democratic National Convention. Fentress works with the Louisiana delegation where Doris Reggie holds out her vote for EMK.

1983 Fentress becomes Managing Director of Advantage International, a new sports marketing company he helps create with Craighill. (*The Washington Times*, 12/08/1997)

1983/84 (?) Fentress is named chairman of the RFK Memorial Board. As chairman, Fentress works with RFK’s daughter, Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, to develop and launch the RFK Human Rights Award. Fentress serves eight years as chairman. (*Boston Magazine*, April 2009; http://www.rfkmemorial.org)

1985 Allan Boesak, Beyers Naude, and Winnie Mandela of South Africa win the first RFK Human Rights Award. (http://www.rfkmemorial.org)

1986

**June** Fentress represents Len Bias, a University of Maryland basketball star, who signs with the Boston Celtics. Bias dies of a cocaine overdose on the 16th. Charles Driesell, the University of Maryland basketball coach, calls Fentress that night and Fentress calls EMK’s office to try to arrange a helicopter to transport a physician to Maryland or get Bias to another hospital, but it is too late. (C. Fraser Smith, *Lenny, Lefty, and the Chancellor: the Len Bias Tragedy and the Search for Reform in Big-time College Basketball*, Baltimore: Bancroft Press, 1992, pp. 17)

**May** As chairman of the RFK Memorial, Fentress travels with EMK and a number of Kennedys to Poland to present the RFK Human Rights Award to Solidarity activists Adam Michnik and Zbigniew Bujak. They are joined by EMK’s three children, as well as Jean Kennedy Smith, Eunice Kennedy Shriver, Patricia Kennedy Lawford, Ethel Kennedy, and five of RFK and Ethel’s children. Greg Craig, Nancy Soderberg, Jim Rooney, Chris Doherty, Caroline Croft, and John Robinson of the *Boston Globe* also travel with the group. EMK meets with Solidarity leader Lech Walesa and the Polish foreign and defense ministers, but not General Jaruzelski. Jaruzelski only would meet with EMK had EMK agreed to play down the award ceremony. EMK then travels to Rome to discuss his trip to Poland with Pope John Paul II. (Adam Clymer, *Edward M, Kennedy: A Biography*, New York: William Morrow, 1999, pp. 413-14)

1987 Kim Keun Tae and In Jae Keun of South Korea win the RFK Human Rights Award. (*The Washington Post*, 10/02/1987)

1988 Gibson Kamau Kuria of Kenya wins the RFK Human Rights Award.
1989  Fang Lizhi of China wins the RFK Human Rights Award.

1990  Amilcar Mendez Urizar of Guatemala wins the RFK Human Rights Award.

May  Fentress joins EMK and other Kennedy family members to honor authors Alec Wilkinson and Tracy Kidder as recipients of the Robert F. Kennedy Book Award. (*The Washington Post*, 05/10/1990)

1991  Raji Sourani of Palestine wins the RFK Human Rights Award.

Spring  William Kennedy Smith is charged with sexual battery in Palm Beach, Florida. Fentress states William "is in some ways pensive and almost retiring...He always gave you the impression of correctness. That's why this whole thing doesn't fit at all." (*St. Petersburg Times*, 05/10/1991)

October  EMK gives a speech at the Kennedy School at Harvard University in which he acknowledges that he has made mistakes in the conduct of his private life.

1992  Chakufwa Chihana of Malawi wins the RFK Human Rights Award. It is around this time that Fentress steps down as chairman of the RFK Memorial.

1997  Advantage International is bought by Interpublic Group where Fentress becomes chairman of the athlete management division later renamed Octagon. (*The New York Times*, 05/20/1997)


2004  December  The Miller Center for Public Affairs at the University of Virginia is awarded the Edward Kennedy Oral History Project. EMK had asked Fentress to look at academic programs to run the project. (*The Boston Globe*, 12/06/2004)

2008  January  EMK announces his support for Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama.


**April**

Fentress hopes to break ground in the summer for the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate, a non-profit educational institute which will educate students and new incoming Senators on the U.S. Senate, while using museum space to trace Senate history and EMK’s Senate career. Fentress serves as president of the institute. *(Boston Magazine, April 2009; The Boston Globe, 01/20/2009)*

**May**

EMK is diagnosed with a brain tumor.

**August**

EMK makes a surprise appearance and speech at the Democratic National Convention.

**2009**

**August**


**September**

Senator John Kerry (D-MA) puts in a $20 million earmark to a defense bill for the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate. *(The Boston Globe, 09/25/2009)*
A. LEE FENTRESS FACT SHEET

Prepared by Bryan Craig
Miller Center, University of Virginia, 10/05/2009

Positions with EMK and the Kennedy family:

• Advance man/aide in RFK’s 1968 presidential campaign.
• Chairman and Advisory Board member, Robert F. Kennedy Memorial.
• Best Buddies, an organization founded by Anthony Kennedy Shriver dedicated to help people with intellectual disabilities join mainstream society.
• President of the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate.

Other positions:

• Assistant U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia.
• 1971-present: sports attorney/agent working with ProServ, Inc., then forming Advantage International in 1983 with Frank Craighill. In 1997, Advantage is sold to the Interpublic Group, and in 2000, Fentress becomes chairman emeritus of Interpublic’s athletic and entertainment marketing company, Octagon.

Possible interview topics:

• 1968 RFK campaign: his work as an advance man, where he first meets EMK.
• 1980 EMK campaign: Fentress works the Louisiana delegation.
• 1987 Poland trip: As chairman of the RKF Memorial, Fentress travels with EMK to Poland to present the RFK Human Rights Award to three Solidarity activists.
• Fentress’ other work as chairman of RFK Memorial.
• Tennis: at EMK’s house in McLean; with Ethel Kennedy at charity events.
• Fentress had helped EMK in the selection of the Miller Center to conduct EMK’s oral history project.
• Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate.
• Fentress’ relationship with EMK as a close friend for over 30 years.