



Becoming JFK: A Profile in Communication

Vito N. Silvestri

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John F. Kennedy began his political communication in the neighborhoods of the Eleventh Congressional District of Massachusetts, using informal more than formal speaking as he learned to speak and began his career as a political leader. For 18 years he practiced the art of communication that is so intrinsic to the art of politics—speeches, small group deliberation, stump speaking in campaigns, radio and television press conferences, debates, and interviews.

Silvestri describes the political and social contexts that shaped Kennedy's earliest efforts as a communicator and politician until his death in 1963. His first campaign became the blueprint for his future political contests; his warnings as Congressman and Senator about Vietnam and Algeria proved prophetic. Kennedy's greatest communication tests involved his persuasion of the public that a Roman Catholic had the right to run for President, his memorable Inaugural Address to a world deadlocked in nuclear stockpiling, his deliberation in the Cuban Missile crisis, his eloquent reasoning for peaceful measures and conciliatory attitudes through his address at American University, his advocacy of civil rights, and his televised presidency—historical firsts for a charismatic American leader of the nuclear half of the 20th century. Scholars, students, and other researchers as well as lay readers will find this study of JKF, political communication, and recent American history fascinating and instructive.



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