

Feature: TCM Host Ben Mankiewicz on His Father & 50 Years After Robert F. Kennedy's Death

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on June 6, 2018 - 11:29am

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CHICAGO – It was 50 years ago today – June 6th, 1968 – that Robert F. Kennedy died, struck down by an assassin's bullet while in California on the presidential campaign trail. His press secretary, Frank Mankiewicz, delivered the news to the media, emphasizing that RFK was only "42 years old." Frank Mankiewicz was the father of Ben Mankiewicz, the current host of Turner Classic Movies (TCM).



"It's On to Chicago, and Let's Win There": Robert F. Kennedy, Moments Before He was Shot

Photo credit: File Photo

In 2012, Ben Mankiewicz was touring on behalf of TCM for their Classic Film Festival, and sat for a duo interview with HollywoodChicago.com with actress Tippi Hedren ("The Birds"). After talking movies, the subject turned to his father's work with Bobby Kennedy during that fateful campaign of 1968. Kennedy entered the race as incumbent President Lyndon B. Johnson dropped out, leaving the Democratic nominee field wide open. Kennedy had gained momentum in the race on June 5th, 1968, when he won the California primary, and had just finished celebrating in the wee hours with his supporters at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles. He took an exit route through the kitchen, and was shot by assassin Sirhan Sirhan, in a crowded and chaotic circumstance.



Ben and Frank Mankiewicz in 2014
Photo credit: TCM.com

As Bobby Kennedy clung to life, the media was updated by his press secretary, Frank Mankiewicz. Throughout the day of June 5th, Mankiewicz gave updates after a four hour operation that removed bullet fragments from Kennedy's brain. The situation went from critical to extremely critical, until an exhausted Mankiewicz faced the press at 2am the next morning and made the following announcement...

"I have, uh, a short — I have a short announcement to read, which I will read, uh — at this time. Senator Robert Francis Kennedy died at 1:44 a.m. today, June 6, 1968."

Ben Mankiewicz, who was only one year old at the time, related his interaction with the subsequent history of the incident. He watched his father carefully in the news footage of the day, especially as more clips became available on YouTube. As he saw the events unfold, he better understood how it directly affected his father.

In the following audio clip from 2012, TCM Host Ben Mankiewicz told HollywoodChicago.com of this father and the passing of Robert F. Kennedy, 50 years ago on June 6th, 1968.

For the Turner Classic Movie (TCM) biography of Ben Mankiewicz, [click here](#). [19] For the Robert F. Kennedy death announcement on YouTube, by Press Secretary Frank Mankiewicz, [click here](#). [20]



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Source URL (retrieved on Mar 29 2024 - 10:20am):

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