

**Dawning Revelation: An Examination of Developments
That Culminated in Estes Kefauver's Emergence as Political TV Star**

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, James Earl and Jean; my wife, Kristi; and my children, Amelia and R.J., who collectively have shaped the best aspects of my past, present and future.

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ABSTRACT

Because of his role as chairman of the Senate crime investigating committee, which held widely viewed hearings in March 1951, U.S. Senator Estes Kefauver has been called television's first political star. This research examines contemporaneous press accounts, particularly those from Kefauver's adopted hometown of Chattanooga, Tenn., to determine the extent to which such a storyline was immediately apparent. Microfilm and electronic database resources, supplemented by book and peer-reviewed journal content, form a contextual framework through which is argued the position that the Chattanooga dailies were in fact attuned to the changes being wrought by Kefauver's probe. Ultimately, *The Chattanooga Times* is found to have pondered those developments and their aftermath much more intently than did the *Chattanooga News-Free Press*.

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INTRODUCTION

Television's first political star, the man whose Senate crime investigating committee's celebrated hearings in 1951 elevated the medium to a position of dominance within American politics – these are distinctions that have been conferred upon U.S. Senator Estes Kefauver.¹

A native of Madisonville, Tenn., educated at the University of Tennessee and Yale Law School, Kefauver first found a niche as a crusading public figure in the mid-1930s, a few years after he settled, and started to practice as an attorney, in Chattanooga, Tenn. A New Deal Democrat elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1939, he took on assignments that turned his attention to issues of corruption. Shortly after overcoming the forces of bossism in his own state and gaining election to the U.S. Senate in 1948, Kefauver formulated the plan whereby he unwittingly configured a new template, one that altered the course of both political and media history.²

But how quickly did those views take shape? Are they the product primarily of retrospective consideration, or can they be found in contemporaneous accounts? This thesis will argue that, throughout the climactic March 1951 sessions, and for at least several years thereafter, the innovative nature of the Kefauver inquest's televised aspect was hailed by print outlets not only in large markets, but also in Chattanooga, where one might expect comparative media-backwater status and political biases to have been offset by natural interest in the “local boy made good.” (Note: Within the time span covered by this work, that city was served by liberally oriented dailies *The Chattanooga Times* and *The Chattanooga News*, the latter of which

¹ David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (New York, NY: Villard Books, 1993), 188; Bernard Rubin, *Political Television* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company Inc., 1967), 11.

² Charles L. Fontenay, *Estes Kefauver: A Biography* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1980), 12, 29-34, 37-40, 42, 69-71, 93, 97-98, 137-153, 164-166.

folded in 1939; and the conservative *Chattanooga Free Press*, which in 1940 became the *News-Free Press*.³)

A close reading of relevant periodical content, then, constitutes the crux of this endeavor. But salient citations from other resources – books and peer-reviewed journal articles pertaining to Kefauver, as well as to political and media history in general – also are interwoven. What results is a contextual framework that additionally incorporates: [1] the circumstances that set Kefauver and television on course for their fateful intersection; [2] the amount of attention given Kefauver’s crime committee in the months that preceded TV’s involvement; [3] the evolution of that involvement; [4] the post-probe relationship between Kefauver and TV.

The memory of Kefauver, dead since 1963, has faded in mainstream consciousness, perhaps. And as a result, the crime committee hearings may very well have received short shrift relative to their historic nature.⁴ But television and politics’ first full-scale convergence merits a new look, and such is the basis of this study.

³ “News-Free Press Makes Bow in Chattanooga Today,” *Chattanooga News-Free Press*, Jan. 21, 1940.

⁴ Ron Garay, “Television and the 1951 Senate Crime Committee Hearings,” *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 22, no. 4 (1978): 469, http://www.heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/jbem22&div=53&collection=journals&set_as_cursor=3&men_tab=srchresults&terms=Television%20and%20the%201951%20Senate%20Crime%20Committee%20Hearings&type=matchall (accessed December 15, 2010).

CHAPTER 1: CHASING RAINBOWS

With hindsight, one could conclude that Carey Estes Kefauver's birth – on July 26, 1903 – came in an age of swift transition.¹ Certainly, it is a notion well-supported by obligatory reflections that *The Chattanooga Times* and others shared not long before, as the 19th century gave way to the 20th.² Such fields as the arts, natural sciences and medicine factored into discussion of forces then shaping the world. But the predominant theme was technological advancement. “The world has made more progress in material things in the last hundred years than it did in all the centuries preceding,” the *Times* said. “Civilized man's mode of existence has been totally altered by his inventions.”

Nor was the evolution seen as being by any means complete. Especially tantalizing, for example, was the ongoing quest to perfect means whereby communication devices could operate “without any visible connection between the receiving and the sending instruments.”³ So when, in 1901, Guglielmo Marconi announced his achievement of *trans-Atlantic* wireless telegraphy, the *Times* proclaimed it “the most wonderful scientific discovery of modern times.”⁴ With much less fanfare, Reginald Fessenden in 1906 succeeded in clear transmission of the human voice, via a practice spread soon known as wireless telephony.⁵

¹ Fontenay, *Estes Kefauver: A Biography*, 12.

² See “Leading One Hundred Events of the Closing Century,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 17, 1900; “Century's Marvels,” *Baltimore Sun*, Jan. 1, 1901, in ProQuest Historical Newspapers (accessed July 7, 2014).

³ “Century of Mechanism,” *Chattanooga Times*, December 30, 1900.

⁴ “The Problem Is Solved,” *Chattanooga Times*, December 15, 1901.

⁵ Edward A. Herron, *Miracle of the Air Waves: A History of Radio* (New York, NY: Julian Messner, 1969), 36-38; “Big Fleet On Its Way,” *Chattanooga Times*, Dec. 17, 1907.

Meanwhile, expanding upon photography's capacity for "appealing to the brain direct through the eye" and thus teaching "more swiftly and more widely than is possible to any other agency," motion pictures generated considerable excitement, as reflected in the *Times*' 1893 report on Thomas Edison's kinetograph camera.⁶ In 1898 the same newspaper described attempts to develop "an apparatus ... which will transmit moving images."⁷ Dubbed *television* two years afterward,⁸ this as-yet-theoretical concept was, the *Times* said, "as far ahead of the kinetoscope (Edison's movie-viewing device) as the latter is ahead of the common photograph."⁹ Taking into account that and other modern marvels, a syndicated article printed in the March 4, 1910, *News* declared, "The golden age is dawning and all certainly will be happy, if they only live long enough."¹⁰

Yet in Kefauver's hometown of Madisonville, the direct impact of actual breakthroughs (to say nothing of expected ones) often was slow to be felt. At earliest, the 1870s was the decade in which the East Tennessee community in question gained telegraph access. Telephone service was fairly prompt, coming to the Monroe County seat in 1883, but only in 1913 did movies at last arrive.¹¹

⁶ "Century of Mechanism"; "Today the Great World's Fair Opens," *The Chattanooga Times*, May 1, 1893.

⁷ Theodore Waters, "The Wonders of the Telectroscope," *The Chattanooga Times*, April 3, 1898.

⁸ Albert Abramson, *The History of Television, 1880 to 1941* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company Inc., 1987), 23.

⁹ Waters, "The Wonders of the Telectroscope"; Thomas W. Bohn, Richard L. Stromgren and Daniel H. Johnson, *Light and Shadows: A History of Motion Pictures*, 2d ed. (Sherman Oaks, CA: Alfred Publishing Company Inc., 1978), 8.

¹⁰ American-Examiner, "Cheer Up! The Golden Age Is Coming," *Chattanooga News*, March 4, 1910

¹¹ Sarah G. Cox Sands, *History of Monroe County, Tennessee: From the Western Frontier Days to the Space Age*, Vol. II (Baltimore, MD: Gateway Press Inc., 1980), 360, 380, 384. This source somewhat obliquely implies that telegraph service existed for the railroad line running through Madisonville. An 1870 date for the construction of said line can be gleaned from "The Railroads," *Republican Banner* (Nashville), October 29, 1870, in ProQuest Historical Newspapers (accessed July 6, 2014).

Elsewhere, though, powerful interests were more in step with the evolution and potential strategic ramifications of such tools. Just as President Lincoln had found Morse's telegraph to be an indispensable means of information-gathering during the American Civil War, the U.S. government and certain of its subsidiaries (i.e., the Navy) were proactive in exploring – and *The Chattanooga News* and *Times* were alert in reporting on – the military potential of wireless technology, both telegraphic and telephonic.¹²

Visual media, on the other hand, were found ideal for helping win not armed conflicts so much as individual hearts and minds. Just as the 1860 Lincoln presidential campaign had made effective use of his photographic portrait – thus prompting his adviser Norman B. Judd to write, “I am coming to believe that likenesses broad cast, are excellent means of electioneering” – politicians and *moving* pictures naturally gravitated toward one another. En route to winning the presidency in 1896, William McKinley appeared in such productions, but it was his immediate successor, Theodore Roosevelt, who became a veritable “matinee idol,” using the nascent art to project his willfully attained, larger-than-life image, and thereby influence the masses.¹³

Yet Estes Kefauver's outlook was shaped by the more traditional forces of family life. Temperamentally, he owed much to his mother, Phredonia Estes Kefauver, who was “gentle but dignified, with a firmness beneath her gentleness.” Politically, he took after his father, Cooke Kefauver, a staunch, progressive Democrat in a mostly Republican region of Tennessee. His

¹² See Tom Wheeler, *Mr. Lincoln's T-Mails: The Untold Story of How Abraham Lincoln Used the Telegraph to Win the Civil War* (HarperCollins, 2006).

¹³ Kiku Adatto, *Picture Perfect: The Art and Artifice of Public Image Making* (New York, NY: BasicBooks, 2003), 4; Lewis L. Gould, *The Modern American Presidency* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 3, 135; Karen C. Lund, “The First Presidential ‘Picture Man’: Theodore Roosevelt and His Times on Film,” *Library of Congress Information Bulletin* 58, no. 4 (September 1999), <http://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9909/tr.html> (accessed July 10, 2014).

town's eventual five-term mayor, the man had supported the presidential bids of William Jennings Bryan, and took Estes to see "the Great Commoner" speak at a local Chautauqua gathering. In summer 1912, when "Popsy" drove Estes and his elder brother, Robert, throughout Monroe County, campaigning on behalf of Woodrow Wilson. As a result, Estes not only got his first taste of grassroots politicking, but also experienced electoral triumph, albeit vicariously, as the New Jersey governor defeated Roosevelt and incumbent President Taft – both nationally and at Monroe's polling places.¹⁴

Another roughly simultaneous, politically charged milestone entailed a sequence of events that illustrated "the inestimable value of wireless (telegraphy) on shipboard" within the private sector.¹⁵ Upon reviewing the lifesaving response, or lack thereof, to distress signals sent out by the White Star Line vessels Republic (1909) and Titanic (1912), Congress in both instances passed usage-requirement bills.¹⁶ The name of the latter legislative measure, the Radio Act of 1912, incorporated the catchall term that increasingly was being applied to wireless communication, even as said technologies increasingly were being embraced by a regulation-resistant segment: hobbyists.

For the Kefauver family and, separately, for Western civilization, altogether grim turning points materialized in summer 1914. On August 9, Robert, age 13, died following a swimming mishap (as noted in the *Times*' obituary section).¹⁷ Meanwhile, 12 days before, the conflict now

¹⁴ Fontenay, *Estes Kefauver: A Biography*, 14, 20, 21, 22, 37..

¹⁵ De Forest 254

¹⁶ De Forest 254, Aitken, 691.

¹⁷ Ibid., 23; "Robert Kefauver, Madisonville," *Chattanooga Times*, Aug. 10, 1914

known as World War I had erupted.¹⁸ In response to the former event, 11-year-old Estes was observed to have become “grave and withdrawn.”¹⁹ As a result of America’s entry into the global conflagration, in April 1917, wireless technology retreated from its place of growing prominence within the civilian population. Corporate know-how was diverted to military ends, as was the expertise of amateurs, whose own installations had been shut down for security purposes.²⁰ (On a related note, work in the rudimentary field of television science slowed considerably.²¹ And independently, the movie business was shaken by the government’s fall 1915 ruling that the Motion Picture Patents Company, a trust formed in 1909, was a “monopoly in restraint of trade” [*Times*].)

Adversity often breeds added strength. So it was that young Kefauver, friends later would suggest, set out to salvage some positive aspect following his brother’s death.²² Perhaps intent on compensating his family, he grew to be a studious, achievement-minded lad, for instance serving as his high school class’ secretary-treasurer and yearbook editor – and declaring that he planned to be a lawyer. The U.S. movie industry, concomitant with the Great War, capitalized in the short run by churning out a spate of patriotic productions, e.g., “Over There” (1917), “Pershing’s Crusaders” (1918), “To Hell With The Kaiser!” (1918), and government films in which top stars (Mabel Normand, Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks Jr., William S. Hart, George M. Cohan, Roscoe “Fatty” Arbuckle, etc.) promoted the Fourth Liberty Loan (1918). Of more long-term

¹⁸ John Graham Royde-Smith and Dennis E. Showalter, *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s.v. “World War I,” accessed July 10, 2014, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/648646/World-War-I>.

¹⁹ Fontenay, *Estes Kefauver: A Biography*, 24.

²⁰ Herron, *Miracle of the Air Waves: A History of Radio*, 87-88, 119-120.

²¹ Abramson, *The History of Television, 1880 to 1941*, 41.

²² Fontenay, *Estes Kefauver: A Biography*, 23.

significance, European upheaval cleared the way for American moviemaking (which by then had shifted its center from New York to Hollywood) to assume global pre-eminence.²³

Meanwhile, in December 1918, the *Times*, citing a *New York Herald* story, reported: “America’s biggest war secret, the development and perfection of the wireless telephone, is no longer a secret Eight years of work by wizards of science in the United States army, aided by civilian workers in radio problems, came to successful consummation last February. . . . The performance . . . left no doubt in the minds of any one that the wireless telephone is an actual, existent thing and that it has been brought to a firm utilitarian standard.” Governmental restrictions on such technology were lifted in October 1919. A few weeks afterward, with industrial concerns and amateur practitioners beginning to make use of those advances, a new colossus – the Radio Corporation of America – was spawned.²⁴ Business as usual, in the term’s strictest sense, had resumed.

As a new decade began, an *all-around* “return to normalcy” (per Republican presidential candidate Warren G. Harding’s campaign pledge) evidently held much allure for many Americans. And the Estes Kefauver who entered the University of Tennessee in fall 1920 certainly was something of a throwback, an altogether unsophisticated country boy. But he quickly initiated a self-reinvention, cultivating “the qualities of leadership and the ability to mix with and gain the admiration and good opinion of his associates.”²⁵ Along the way, he won election to the student council and as class president, and served as editor in chief of the *Orange and White* student newspaper. In what has been called “the golden age of sport,” he played

²³ Fontenay, *Estes Kefauver: A Biography*, 23; Thomas W. Bohn, Richard L. Stromgren and Daniel H. Johnson, *Light and Shadows: A History of Motion Pictures*, 25.

²⁴ Herron, *Miracle of the Air Waves: A History of Radio*, 95-96, 120-121.

²⁵ Fontenay, *Estes Kefauver: A Biography*, 30.

football at UT, earning a starting position on the offensive line his final two seasons, and he also was a record-setting track athlete. Still, primarily retroactive is the import journalists and biographers later ascribed to Kefauver's undergraduate achievements.²⁶ At the time, his exploits, even on the gridiron, received scant attention outside Knoxville and Madisonville.²⁷ (In *The Chattanooga Times*, mention was limited to game-day lineup listings, in which his surname at least twice was misspelled, as "Kefuver" and "Benjauver."²⁸)

Some 400 miles northeast, coincident with the start of Kefauver's college days, another *ex post facto* watershed transpired. Even as most users continued to class radio telephony alongside other forms of interpersonal communication, newly minted Pittsburgh station KDKA sought to command the attention of an *audience*. Thus did KDKA turn to national politics, airing returns of the November 2, 1920, presidential election. Media historians note that this presentation (which delineated Harding's landslide victory) was pre-scheduled and pre-advertised. As such, it marked the beginning of *commercial* broadcasting.²⁹ Nevertheless, apart from the Steel City, press coverage appears to have been nonexistent with regard to that "red letter day." Having no full-fledged antecedent, it offered no basis for exuberant expectations. The *Times* in 1921 did allude to a number of broadcasts, beginning in January with American Relief Administration head Herbert Hoover's plea for relief to Europe – an address later seen to have "set a precedent that politicians all over the country followed with deep interest. ... A hundred thousand politicians would follow Hoover, their voices trickling out of the earphones and, later,

²⁶ Fontenay, *Estes Kefauver: A Biography*, 32, 34

²⁷ See "Vols Down Wildcats 14-7 in Thrilling Game," *Knoxville Sentinel*, Dec. 1, 1922,

²⁸ "Parsons Beaten by Volunteers," *The Chattanooga Times*, Oct. 1, 1922; "Tennessee Goes in the Air to Win," *The Chattanooga Times*, Oct. 14, 1923,

²⁹ Herron, *Miracle of the Air Waves: A History of Radio*, 83, 93-94, 100-101.

booming out of loudspeakers.” But at the time, such a prospect likely would have seemed ludicrous. Even by the end of that year, only 10 stations were operating, and many were the issues that afflicted their endeavors. Yet radio had touched a “fundamental instinct.” Transmitted from up to thousands of miles distant, “The thin, sometimes unintelligible voices and music” – another quickly isolated broadcast staple – “were almost hypnotic in their mass effect on the American people.”³⁰ From January through April 1922, 208 new outlets began broadcasting, while for the year in its entirety, the number of sets increased from 60,000 to 1.5 million (including the one installed in Harding’s White House study).³¹ And by 1924, when both major parties’ political conventions were broadcast, the newer of the wireless media had taken more or less exclusive ownership of now-familiar one-word nomenclature invoked (and adapted) two years previous in the *Times*’ summation of affairs: “The radio bug has bitten the entire United States now, (with a) resultant epidemic of ‘radioitis.’”³²

Of course, sports and broadcasting (also well-suited mates, it turned out) were but two of the reasons the ’20s roared. Moral turpitude, in its myriad manifestations, was another. For example, the 18th Amendment begat Prohibition, which in turn begat an organized-crime wave embodied by Al Capone and his ilk.³³ Politics was rocked by the Teapot Dome scandal.³⁴ And in film-industry news, Arbuckle and Normand found themselves embroiled in celebrated murder

³⁰ Herron 106, 111, 112, 113, 121-122

³¹ Ibid., 111; Associated Press, “Harding Has Radio Telephone in Study; Writers to Have One,” *The Washington Post*, Feb 9, 1922, in ProQuest Historical Newspapers (accessed June 6, 2013).

³² Chester, *Radio, Television and American Politics*, 18-20.

³³ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s.v. “Al Capone” accessed July 13, 2014, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/94065/Al-Capone>.

³⁴ Lewis L. Gould, *The Modern American Presidency*. (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 63.

trials.³⁵ The legal profession, as noted earlier, long since was Kefauver's aspiration, and so in 1925 he enrolled at Yale Law School, where he pursued an "assiduous," relatively decadence-free existence dominated by study and work.³⁶

Mere weeks after Kefauver came to that "staid old Bulldog of the east," the university in November 1925 made arrangements whereby "many of its educational and other features will be broadcast by remote control."³⁷ Closer to home, Chattanooga's first station, WDOD, had begun operation the previous April.³⁸ And throughout the country, tuned-in types were becoming acquainted with on-air mainstays: announcers Graham McNamee and Milton Cross, musical performers Al Jolson and Paul Whiteman, comedic cohorts "Sam 'n' Henry" (later to be renamed "Amos 'n' Andy") – and President Coolidge, who, his "Silent Cal" nickname notwithstanding, was adept at using radio to shape public opinion."³⁹ In the meantime, with radio *listening* still a newly entrenched pastime, the *Times* reported in June 1925 that "seeing by radio is being rapidly developed in laboratory demonstrations."⁴⁰ And indeed, the following months brought several milestones along those lines, demonstrating that television, however crude its form, was now a reality.⁴¹

³⁵ "Arbuckle Held For the Murder of 'Movie' Star," *The Chattanooga Times*, Sept. 12, 1921; "Murder Still Puzzles Police," *Chattanooga News*, Feb. 4, 1922,

³⁶ Fontenay, *Estes Kefauver: A Biography*, 40

³⁷ Newspaper Enterprise Association, "Yale Joins WTIC In Broadcasting," *Chattanooga News*, Nov. 28, 1925,

³⁸ "Station WDOD Is Officially Put on the Air," *The Chattanooga Times*, April 14, 1925.

³⁹ Chester, *Radio, Television and American Politics*, 16; Joel Whitburn, *Pop Memories 1890-1954: The History of American Popular Music* (Menomonee Falls, WI: Record Research Inc., 1986), 649.

⁴⁰ Robert D. Heinl, "Listening In," *The Chattanooga Times*, June 28, 1925.

⁴¹ See "Motion Pictures Now Broadcast," *The Chattanooga Times*, Jan. 25, 1926; Associated Press, "Soon May Be Able to See Distant Events by Radio," *The Chattanooga Times*, Jan. 26, 1926; Jan. 26: Abramson, *The History of Television, 1880 to 1941*, 76-84.

In November 1926, RCA's creation of the National Broadcasting Company marked the start of network radio. The following year, NBC began operating two networks, the Red and the Blue, while a new rival, the Columbia Broadcasting System, originated. Another event with major repercussions: the enacting of the Radio Act of 1927, which gave to the government expressly defined regulatory powers over broadcasting, created an enforcement arm known as the Federal Radio Commission and also contained a provision mandating equal air time for opposing political candidates. Hoover – who as the Harding-Coolidge administration's secretary of commerce had played a major role in helping shape radio – on April 7, 1927, appeared in an experimental Washington-to-New York telecast that made front-page headlines around the nation (and in the *Times*).⁴² That same day, as reported in the *News*, Warner Bros.' new "voice-picture invention," the Vitaphone, was shown in Chattanooga, marking also the first Tennessee demonstration of the industry-altering productions soon to be known as "talkies."⁴³

Returning to the Volunteer State in summer 1927, Kefauver, who had received his Yale law degree in June, accepted a job at Chattanooga's Cooke, Swaney & Cooke firm. His arrival was greeted with brief press mention, the *News* misspelling his given name ("Estis") and the *Times* kicking off the historical rewrite, stating he was "one of the star football players" while at UT.⁴⁴ In December 1927 his article "The Doctrine of Ultra Vires" was published in the *Tennessee Law Review*, as reported by the *News*. This treatise brought Kefauver to the attention

⁴² "Hoover Talks and Is Seen by Telephone: Successful Demonstration of the Television; Scientists' Dream Becomes Reality; Men in Washington and New York Hold Wire Conversation and Each Sees Other as if Face to Face," *The Chattanooga Times*, April 8, 1927.

⁴³ "Vitaphone Pleases Special Audience: No Mechanical Effect Is Noticeable," *Chattanooga News*, April 7, 1927.

⁴⁴ "Mrs. Kefauver Entertains With 'Cuckoo Party' Friday," *Chattanooga News*, July 30, 1927; "Joins Local Law Firm," *The Chattanooga Times*, Aug. 7, 1927.

of Chattanooga's Sizer, Chamblis & Sizer firm, which soon hired him. He was a man "on the way up."⁴⁵

As 1928 began, a bullish future also was foreseen for television, so much so that the *Times*, in an editorial comment, echoed predictions that such technology soon would be in American homes. And abundant signs weighed in favor of such unbridled optimism. In January, in Schenectady, N.Y., Dr. E.F.W. Alexanderson supervised the first successful public television broadcast (*News*). Six months later the FRC issued TV licenses for the first time. At the head of the line was Charles Francis Jenkins' experimental station, W3XK, Washington, while construction permits were issued to RCA/NBC's New York station, W2XBS; WREC Inc.'s planned Memphis enterprise, 4XA; and others (*Times*). On Aug. 22, Democratic presidential candidate Al Smith's acceptance speech in Albany, New York, was shown in the first-ever remote telecast, by Schenectady station WGY. Though that feat was not mentioned in the Chattanooga papers, *Times* contributor David Lawrence soon afterward wrote, "Television is the next step in the making of political history." But the present unquestionably belonged to radio, which, as the *Times* observed, "is playing a tremendous part in this year's campaign." By way of elaboration, Lawrence on Nov. 6 said: "In many respects this had been the most unusual campaign in American history. Eight years ago about fifty people here (in New York) had their radio sets sufficiently accurate to capture the broadcasting by KDKA at Pittsburgh. Today perhaps 50,000,000 persons have been listening to the campaign and election returns." And there remained untapped potential. In addition to both major-party candidates' extensive, mutually exclusive use of the medium – bolstering Lawrence's claim that "the old-fashioned method of reaching the voter by personal appeal on the stump has been abandoned" – "there was a

⁴⁵ Fontenay, *Estes Kefauver: A Biography*, 45-46, 50.

possibility of a great debate on the radio between Herbert Hoover and Gov. Smith.” Such an encounter’s non-actualization probably was just as well for Hoover, who, his long-standing ties to the medium notwithstanding, was said to lack vocal presence. At any rate, the Republican (whose campaign also had made use of film) won the presidency.⁴⁶ But less than a year later, as the 1920s drew to a close, his administration was undone – and TV, radio and movies, along with most other aspects of the economy, to varying degrees were set back – by the coming of the Great Depression.

Prosperity continued to attend Kefauver’s endeavors, however. In March 1930, he was named a junior partner in his law firm, which accordingly changed its name to Sizer, Chambliss & Kefauver. Financially secure, he enjoyed an active social life. Such proclivities did present an occasional downside, though, as when a nightclub raid resulted in his being arrested for consumption of alcohol.⁴⁷

On a grand scale, with hard times bringing disillusionment to many, themes of “crime, corruption and the evils and weaknesses of particular social mores and institutions” were seen in mass media content, most notably gangster films, e.g., *Little Caesar* (1931), *The Public Enemy* (1931) and *Scarface* (1932).⁴⁸ Conversely, a “‘fun’ Depression” was depicted by backstage musicals such as *42nd Street* (1933), *Gold Diggers of 1933* (1933) and *Chasing Rainbows* (1930).⁴⁹ The latter introduced the chart-topping radio hit “Happy Days Are Here Again,” which

⁴⁶ Chester, *Radio, Television and American Politics*, 24.

⁴⁷ Fontenay, *Estes Kefauver: A Biography*, 47, 49, 50.

⁴⁸ Thomas W. Bohn, Richard L. Stromgren and Daniel H. Johnson, *Light and Shadows: A History of Motion Pictures*, 276, Maurice Bardeche and Robert Brasillach, *The History of Motion Pictures* (New York, NY: Arno Press & The New York Times, 1970), 315-316.

⁴⁹ Thomas W. Bohn, Richard L. Stromgren and Daniel H. Johnson, *Light and Shadows: A History of Motion Pictures*, 207.

1932 Democratic presidential nominee Franklin D. Roosevelt adopted as a campaign theme. For the song echoed his broadcast pledge of “a new deal for the American people,” which in turn was a response to the gloom expressed in the also popular tunes “Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?” and “In a Shanty in Old Shanty Town.”⁵⁰ In promoting its candidate, the Democratic National Committee went so far as to televise a program over CBS’s experimental New York station, W2XAB (which a few weeks later announced plans to carry some election returns, as reported by the *Times*).⁵¹ But radio still carried the day, just as FDR carried the nation’s vote, in overwhelming fashion. And literally from Day 1 of his administration – March 4, 1933, when he issued his inaugural proclamation, “the only thing we have to fear is fear itself” – Roosevelt demonstrated the extent to which “The radio has placed a powerful weapon in the hands of the president.”⁵² His “fireside chats” and other broadcasts maintained an interplay whereby “President Roosevelt talks to the people; they hear, and his sincerity is as plain to them as the words that he uses” (*Free Press*). Of course, voices of dissent likewise could be broadcast. Thus followed the emergence of Louisiana’s Huey Long and Michigan’s Father Charles Coughlin as “popular leaders of the dissatisfied” (*Times*).⁵³

Kefauver was not a New Deal disparager. Rather, after being given charge of the *Chattanooga News*’ legal affairs, the young professional became *more* politically liberal – and

⁵⁰ Joel Whitburn, *Pop Memories 1890-1954: The History of American Popular Music*, 650, 651

⁵¹ “Television Makes Debut in Political Campaign; Democrats’ Stage Group Broadcasts a Show,” *The New York Times*, Oct. 12, 1932, in ProQuest Historical Newspapers (accessed September 16, 2012); Associated Press, “Around the Clock Radio,” *The Chattanooga Times*, Nov. 8, 1932.

⁵² “The President’s Address,” *The Chattanooga Times*, March 5, 1933; Andrew M. Carothers, “Around the Dial,” *Chattanooga Free Press*, June 7, 1934.

⁵³ See also Chester, *Radio, Television and American Politics*, 34-35, 193-198.

outspokenly so.⁵⁴ Beginning in 1933 his name and views increasingly appeared in local newspaper content, with such headlines as “Kefauver Raps State Tax Law Before Oratory: Believes Old Constitution Bars New Industries; Lists Needed Changes To Modernize Statutes; Ways to Get Tax Dodger, Expand Veto Power Urged in Speech – Would Take Local Acts From Assembly” (January 6, 1933, *Times*), “Social Attitude Seen by Attorney in Later Interpretation of Law: Kefauver Finds Tendency to Abandon Precedent – Believes Statutes Need Revising” (June 5, 1933, *News*) and “Kefauver Urges New Constitution: Old Instrument Inadequate, Chattanooga Says” (June 16, 1933, *News*).

Liberal as ever was the trend regarding government jurisdiction over communication technologies. The Communications Act of 1934, enacted in June of that year, provided powers for “regulating interstate and foreign commerce” relative broadcasting (as well as telegraph and telephone). Among the measure’s provisions was creation of the Federal Communications Commission, which replaced the FRC. Also, equal air time for candidates remained a requirement, outlined in Section 315, a name with which the rule was to become synonymous.⁵⁵ Revolutionary, meanwhile, was frequency modulation, Edwin Armstrong Walker’s new “static-free” radio technology.⁵⁶ But “too conservative in its current state to be interesting to fans” was television, said North American Newspaper Alliance’s Mollie Merrick (*Times*).⁵⁷ Nevertheless, from July 1-6, 1935, hundreds of Chattanoogaans descended upon Lovemans department store to

⁵⁴ Fontenay, *Estes Kefauver: A Biography*, 67-68.

⁵⁵ See “Communications Act of 1934,” <http://transition.fcc.gov/Reports/1934new.pdf> (accessed July 11, 2014)

⁵⁶ Abramson, *The History of Television*, 1880 to 1941, 204.

⁵⁷ Mollie Merrick, North American Newspaper Alliance, “Moviedom Seeks Television as Novelty,” *The Chattanooga Times*, May 26, 1935.

visit a “television theatre” erected therein.⁵⁸ Having now seen the medium demonstrated “in all its crude but roseate infancy,” *News* contributor Fletcher Knebel wrote, “The day of the living room telecast, if the Lovemans spectacle is a true index, is not far off.”⁵⁹ Elsewhere in the city, surprisingly traditional were Kefauver’s plans. Theretofore a “most formidable bachelor,” in fall 1934 he had become engaged to Scottish lass Nancy Pigott, whom he met during her visit to Chattanooga. (Before she sailed from New York, he gave her a radio as a farewell gift.⁶⁰) The next summer, *Times* articles documented Kefauver’s tongue-in-cheek petition for a leave of absence from work, his departure for Glasgow and finally “the long-distance wedding event of the year” (Aug. 8, 1935). With that, the couple came home to Chattanooga’s Lookout Mountain, and Kefauver, at 32 years of age, began settling into married life.⁶¹

A different sort of union had taken place in July 1934, as Catholics, Jews and Protestants undertook a “war against motion picture indecency.”⁶² Self-regulatory agency the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America Inc. took heed, instituting a “clean pictures movement.” One result was a “new type of gangster picture” – for example, *‘G’ Men* (1935), *Public Enemy’s Wife* (1936) and *You Can’t Get Away With It* (1936) – in which the bad guys,

⁵⁸ The store was owned by Col. R.L. Moore, father of opera/movie star Grace Moore; see “Grace Moore Sings in Atlanta,” *The Chattanooga Times*, Oct. 23, 1932.

⁵⁹ Fletcher Knebel, “Television Still in Infancy, Shows Promise of Success: Exhibit at Lovemans Reminds One of Radio Fifteen Years Ago,” *Chattanooga News*, July 6, 1935.

⁶⁰ Fontenay, *Estes Kefauver: A Biography*, 55

⁶¹ “Kefauver Will Sail For Scotland Friday,” *The Chattanooga Times*, July 14, 1935; “Lawyer Goes to Old Testament To Obtain His ‘Marriage Leave,’” *The Chattanooga Times*, July 16, 1935; “Miss Pigott Wed to C.E. Kefauver: Rites in Glasgow, Scotland, Held at Parish Church; Chattanooga Lawyer, Bride to Return After European Vacation,” *The Chattanooga Times*, Aug. 9, 1935; “Dan Cupid Breaks Records for Year,” *The Chattanooga Times*, Jan. 1, 1936.

⁶² North American Newspaper Alliance, “Clergy Opens War On Indecent Films,” *The Chattanooga Times*, July 10, 1934.

rather than being glorified, got their just deserts.⁶³ Formed in roughly the same period was a working relationship whereby “After years of determined resistance, Hollywood has gone in for radio.” Consequently, The Associated Press noted, “Every star of consequence has been or will be on the air. ... The arrival of television can’t do more.” (*Times*). But such an arrival, or at least the promise thereof, *did* continue to captivate. Thus, AP reported, “Nearly everybody wants to know: ‘When will there be public television?’”(*Times*). Hinting at an answer were such headlines as “Science Makes Its Television Dream Come True” (July 11, 1936, *News*), “200 View New York’s First Television Show” (a presentation that included “a news reel about President Roosevelt and election results”; November 7, 1936, *Free Press*) and “Telephone Television Sends Movie in Sound” (November 10, 1937, *Times*). The incubation period perhaps was near an end.

Certainly developing quickly was Kefauver’s sense of civic responsibility. As “a young lawyer interested in good government in Tennessee,” he recalled later, he was “troubled by the unpleasant realization that there was a tie-up between crime and politics.”⁶⁴ Years would pass before he took up that issue, but in mid-1936 Kefauver joined the “Volunteers,” a group seeking reform of Hamilton County government. Voted as the organization’s vice president, then president, he also was its “ace speaker” and as such often was called upon to explain or defend its motives. In the process, he garnered much press coverage.⁶⁵ And while the group’s efforts were doomed to frustration, Kefauver’s performance bolstered his standing as a “lawyer and public-spirited citizen (who) has reflected the hopes and aspirations of every one (*sic*) who

⁶³ Mollie Merrick, North American Newspaper Alliance, “‘G-Man’ Inaugurates New Film Era,” *The Chattanooga Times*, April 28, 1935.

⁶⁴ Estes Kefauver, *Crime in America* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1951), 1.

⁶⁵ Fontenay, *Estes Kefauver: A Biography*, 68-69.

desires to achieve for this community sound, enlightened progress of all its interests.”⁶⁶ So, in January 1937, the Chattanooga Junior Chamber of Commerce named him the city’s Young Man of the Year. “The award,” as reported by the *Times*, “was made at a public ceremony in the WDOD radio playhouse, with the program witnessed by approximately 350 spectators.”

And, for good measure, it was “broadcast to radio listeners.”⁶⁷

⁶⁶ “Mr. Kefauver Honored,” *The Chattanooga Times*, Jan. 23, 1937.

⁶⁷ “‘Man of Year’ Award Is Won by Kefauver: Young Attorney Acclaimed for Outstanding Work in Public Service; Given Chamber Medal; Civic Leaders Bestow Praises on Him in Ceremonies for ‘Man of Year,’” *The Chattanooga Times*, Jan. 23, 1937.

CHAPTER 2: WAR OF THE WORLDS

Estes Kefauver's eldest child, Lindsay Kefauver (born October 24, 1941), recalls her father as having been a very busy man, frequently out of town on business. On nights when he came home, he rarely did so before 9, and he brought with him "mounds of paperwork." When he arrived earlier, he perused the evening newspaper. "We'd read the 10 quiz questions," the daughter said. "We'd try to answer, and then he'd answer if we couldn't." But to the best of her recollection, "he never listened to radio."¹

Whatever his media habits, when a still reform-minded Kefauver announced in June 1938 his candidacy for the Tennessee state Senate, he no doubt was quite aware of radio's potency as a political tool.² And so, four days after his entry into the race, a *Free Press* advertisement announced, "Hear Estes Kefauver Tonight Over WDOD, at 6:30." Through August 3, the day before the election, similar notices advised of broadcasts by Kefauver and his opponent, fellow attorney Joe S. Bean. Ultimately, Kefauver lost by 307 votes out of roughly 15,000 cast. His backers leveled "outraged accusations of election irregularities," but he declined to contest the result. Subsequently, the *Times* said, "The voters who supported Mr. Kefauver will hope that he regards his first campaign for a seat in the Senate as only the beginning of a career in the public service." The *News* opined that "Mr. Kefauver is a man who can go far in public life."

Global political prospects, meanwhile, were increasingly bleak in 1938. While events such as the *Anschluss* (March) and the Munich Agreement (September) unfolded, American

¹ Fontenay, *Estes Kefauver: A Biography*, 126; Lindsay Kefauver, email to Jamie Bumpus, July 9, 2013.

² "Estes Kefauver Enters Race For State Senate," *Chattanooga Free Press*, June 7, 1938.

broadcasters provided widely hailed news coverage.³ And in December, Warner Bros. announced plans for the “the screen industry’s first celluloid blow at political dictatorship,” *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (released the following May). Of course, sinister elements still could be found in the United States, as well. Thus, Hollywood’s gangster genre endured, giving rise to, for example, *When G-Men Step In* (newspaper ad blurb: “Smashing America’s Greatest Crime Network!”) and *Racket Busters*. And speaking of threats, “What about television?” wrote the North American Newspaper Alliance’s Harold Heffernan. “When it comes will it have any effect on theater business?”

Rampant uncertainty (so the story goes) gave way to outright terror when, on October 30, 1938, Orson Welles’ *Mercury Theatre on the Air* presented its adaptation of H.G. Wells’ *War of the Worlds*. As reported in the Times, “Chattanoogans, along with their credulous brothers and sisters all over the country, felt the shivers and chills of Halloween ghost stories twenty-four hours ahead of time ... when a ‘fairy tale’ radio broadcast apparently convinced them that the nation had been taken over by strange men from Mars and that fatalities had already ranged from forty to 7,000.” But for Kefauver, who years later described himself as “a bundle of calm,” all was well, and soon to be better still. On New Year’s Eve, his civic stature was underscored as he appeared on local station WAPO’s “‘good will’ broadcast of representatives of labor, agriculture, business, the medical profession, county government, city government and the legal profession” (*Free Press*). Two weeks later new Governor Prentice Cooper announced Kefauver’s appointment as state as commissioner of finance and taxation, a position he accepted only on an interim basis. Upon Kefauver’s resignation in April, the *Free Press* said, “he leaves behind him

³ Sally Bedell. Smith, *In All His Glory: The Life of William S. Paley*, in *Today’s Best Nonfiction*, edited by Barbara J. Morgan and Tanis H. Erdmann (Pleasantville, NY: The Reader’s Digest Association Inc., 1990), 290-292.

an unusual record of bringing collection of state tax levies up sufficiently in the three months he has been in office to avert an expected \$1,000,000 deficit for the fiscal year ending June 30, and instead giving strong promise of a balanced budget for the current year.” Consequently, the *Free Press* added: “There should be further political promotion ahead for Mr. Kefauver, if he chooses it after further exclusive attention to his private law practice. Or does he have another good position in view already?”

Opportunity was the watchword for TV in spring 1939. Within the ready-made showcase that was the New York World’s Fair, NBC on April 30 inaugurated “the first regular public television service in the history of our country.”⁴ President Roosevelt delivered the fair’s opening address, and in the weeks and months that followed, visitors to the RCA pavilion witnessed W2XBS’s telecasts of baseball, basketball and football games, boxing and hockey matches, and a circus, all industry firsts.⁵ A *Free Press* editorial writer commented, “Television evidently is on the way, even though its range is limited as yet.” Incidentally, thanks at least in part to some string-pulling by Kefauver, his sister Nora by that point had been chosen as a hostess for the fair’s Tennessee exhibit. But apparently he himself never attended, preoccupied as he thereafter became with other matters.

When long-serving U.S. Representative Sam D. McReynolds, from Tennessee’s 3rd District, died July 11, 1939. Kefauver immediately was mentioned among possible successors. Eight days later he officially announced his candidacy. The *Times* on August 12 reported Kefauver’s pledge “to work with ‘our great party chieftain, President Roosevelt,’ if elected to the congress.” Just the same, the *Free Press* said, Kefauver is “a good man as New Dealers go.”

⁴ Michael Ritchie, *Please Stand By: A Prehistory of Television* (Woodstock, NY: The Overlook Press, 1994), 60-61

Hoping to bolster the momentum he had gained during his service in the governor's cabinet, Kefauver again took his campaign to the airwaves.⁶ In mid-August, his final Democratic opponent dropped out of the race, prompting the *News* to comment, "We recall no similar incidents in recent times where the citizens have responded so enthusiastically to a candidacy as they have to Mr. Kefauver's, nor can we recall an instance where a candidate commanded so large and diverse a following on his ability alone."

Less than two weeks before the general election, Germany's invasion of Poland plunged the Old World into war once again. September 9, in line with Roosevelt's "fireside chat" position, Kefauver commented: "We do not want to have any part in war or anything to do with it. I am not in favor of America becoming involved in European entanglements. I would never favor this country participating in war except in defense of our own people and on our own soil" (*News*). That same day, Heffernan wrote that MPPDA President Will Hays had "hammered home to all studio representatives in his group their solemn obligation to play ball with the United States government in its avowed policy of maintaining strict neutrality in the present conflict" (*Times*). Also in the conflict's opening days, the president said war broadcasts would not be censored. Reciprocally, NBC, CBS and the Mutual Broadcasting System (which was organized in 1934) said they would try to avoid "horror, suspense and undue excitement," while also attempting to be "temperate, responsible and mature in selecting the manner in which they make the facts of war and its attendant circumstances known to the public," the Associated Press reported (*Times*).

⁵ Harry Castleman and Walter J. Podrazik, *Watching TV: Six Decades of American Television*, 2d ed. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 10

⁶ Fontenay, *Estes Kefauver: A Biography*, 91; "Hear Estes Kefauver," *The Chattanooga Times*, Aug. 14, 1939.

On September 13, 1939, Kefauver won “a sweeping victory” versus Republican and Independent hopefuls. One week later, he and his wife departed for Washington. Some eight months before their arrival, NBC had begun experimental telecasts in the nation’s capital. On July 24, radio galleries had opened in the Capitol’s House and Senate chambers.⁷ And on October 17, not quite four weeks after Kefauver’s House swearing-in, Columbia Pictures premiered *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. In that Frank Capra-directed film – starring James Stewart as Jefferson Smith, “an earnest young man, steeped in patriotic ideals and the teachings of history, who is suddenly catapulted into the United States Senate” following the death of a veteran legislator – a twice-seen disclaimer reads: “The names, characters and incidents used herein are fictitious. Any similarity to any name, character or incident is unintentional.” Acclaimed though the picture was, it also stirred some controversy. “If Congress passes the so-called Neely Anti-Block Booking Bill, which has been described as a back-crusher to the present distributing set-up of the film business, the motion picture producers may have only themselves to blame,” the *Times* said in an editorial opinion. “According to an article written for the North American Newspaper Alliance by Mr. Harold Heffernan, ‘insiders’ in Hollywood look for ‘an early and smashing retaliation’ for the release of the new picture, ‘Mr. Smith Goes to Washington,’ a film which many members of Congress, particularly in the Senate, feel holds them up to ridicule and maligns them.”⁸

As for Mr. Kefauver, his first congressional assignments were of the “‘junk’ committee” variety.⁹ But on January 8, 1940, he was named to the House Judiciary. This plum appointment,

⁷ Chester, *Radio, Television and American Politics*, Page 62.

⁸ “‘Mr. Smith’ and Congress,” *The Chattanooga Times*, Nov. 1, 1939.

⁹ Fontenay, *Estes Kefauver: A Biography*, 103

to “one of the most important committees in the lower legislative chamber,” was rife with implications Kefauver could not have foreseen. At the time, he said simply: “I know of no committee on which I’d rather serve. It will give me an opportunity to work on legislation affecting the courts and judiciary and in which the legal profession is interested” (*Times*). On January 25, the *Times* reported, he “presided over the House of Representatives for the first time ... when he served as chairman of the house committee of the whole which was debating the post-office treasury appropriations bills.” And on August 21, he made what was, as best can be determined, his earliest network broadcast, a talk titled “Uncertainties in Our Presidential Election System” (*Times*).

Increasingly sure of television’s potential, NBC that June provided live coverage of the Republican National Convention, with the event seen in host city Philadelphia, as well as New York and Schenectady. The next month, technical limitations were such that footage of the Democratic convention, in Chicago, was seen only after film was flown to New York. During the November 5 election, in which both Roosevelt and Kefauver emerged victorious, W2XBS aired live updates. “As the bulletins appeared on a news printer they were picked up by a National Broadcasting company television camera and flashed to homes, taverns, hotels and party headquarters in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut,” the *Times* said. “NBC estimated 50,000 persons gathered around television receivers to watch the news come in.”

War news, even though originating half a world away, had by then become a year-round concern. On May 20, 1940, AP’s C.E. Butterfield wrote:

Broadcast radio more and more is taking its place as an element in Europe’s war. Numerous instances of microphones joining in the battle background have come to light; no doubt others will develop as fighting goes on.

At the firing of the first gun and even before that broadcasting was used by the belligerents as a medium for propaganda distribution and lately there have been indications it has aided in spreading rumors designed to disconcert the enemy.

Too, there is its wide adoption as a rostrum from which leaders address their peoples and the enemy as well. Not only have there been efforts thus to fortify morale with inspirational-type speeches, but to distribute reports of developments. (*News-Free Press*)

Attesting to those dynamics were print references to CBS correspondent Edward R. Murrow in London (*Times*), and also headlines such as “Just Who Is Lord Haw Haw?” (July 22, 1940, *News-Free Press*) and “Should Hitler Be Barred From the Air?” (July 22, 1940, *News-Free Press*). On September 30, Butterfield wrote: “Radio is making plans to concentrate more and more attention on national defense. One of the things in prospect is a series of broadcasts from selective service training camps.” Hollywood, despite its earlier neutrality pledge, likewise began to evince a war-minded stance. The Three Stooges’ *You Nazty Spy* and Charlie Chaplin’s *The Great Dictator* (both 1940) dared spoof the fuhrer; the Abbott and Costello-Andrews Sisters vehicles *Buck Privates* and *In the Navy* (both 1941) were lighthearted looks at American military life; while *Sergeant York* (1941), starring Gary Cooper, soberly depicted the exploits of Tennessee’s World War I hero, Alvin York. And not content merely to portray a soldier, “Lanky James Stewart rolled out of bed this morning (March 22, 1941) at an hour when many of his movie colleagues were just rolling in, and went off to join the army,” the United Press reported (*News-Free Press*).

The U.S. government stance by the end of 1940 also had shifted toward being more openly pro-involvement. Following the lead of FDR’s lend-lease plan, “Representative Estes Kefauver today (January 4, 1941) urged utmost aid to war-ravaged Britain without resorting to subterfuge,” the *News-Free Press* reported. “The Chattanooga said he found considerable support for his views among his colleagues.” On February 7, Kefauver, “in supporting the lend-

lease bill and attacking its opponents,” said, “This is no time for quibbling over details” (*News-Free Press*). In his May 27 fireside chat, Roosevelt declared a full national emergency. Thus, the U.S. would do whatever was necessary to help Britain combat the Nazi threat (*Times*). On September 10, “Commenting that the United States is already in the war to the extent that Hitler will attack us when and if he can, Representative Estes Kefauver ... recommended a ‘more aggressive use’ of our navy and air corps with the view of ending the war within a year” (*Times*). “Thus,” wrote the *Times*’ Fred Hixson, “it can be presumed that Mr. Kefauver has canvassed his district and learned that its citizens favor a shooting war, if such is necessary to insure a victory for Britain and her allies.”

Broadcasters’ opinions regarding the war were not to be disseminated. For “A declaration that a radio station ‘can not (*sic*) be an advocate,’ but must present ‘all sides of important public questions fairly, objectively and without bias,’ came today (January 17, 1941) from the federal communications commission,” AP reported (*Times*). In other FCC business, on May 3 that body approved “regulations which it said were intended to increase the number of radio networks and give individual stations ‘wider latitude’ in their dealings with the networks,” AP reported. “The new regulations, among other things, will: Make it necessary for the National Broadcasting company to dispose of one of its two networks, known as the Red and the Blue” (the latter of which was sold in 1943 and changed its name to the American Broadcasting Company in 1945) (*Times* and *News-Free Press*). And finally, on July 1, with the FCC having approved audio and visual standards (frequency modulation and 525 lines, respectively), commercial television began. In New York, where W2XBS was rechristened WNBT, and W2XAB became WCBW, “Programs range from visualized news through quiz shows, movies, vaudeville acts and other items. NBC also is continuing its remote pickup of sports,” Butterfield wrote (*News-Free Press*).

Meanwhile, Special News Service reported, “The Washington (TV) station is expected to be under test by November and begin programs by next March.” But at the same time, “NBC said that with ‘national defense the radio industry’s No. 1 program today,’ construction of stations and the like would be ‘carried out subject only to the demands of the defense agencies of the Government’” (*News-Free Press*).

With the events of December 7, 1941, combat-related matters emerged as an unrivaled priority. “War has come,” *Wide World* reported, “and broadcast radio finds itself in the thick of it. From the time of the first (Pearl Harbor) attack, all networks have been putting regular program schedules into a secondary category in favor of details of the latest developments.” And as opposed to movie newsreels, which, then as always, were seen days after the events they depicted, even television quickly “got in on the outbreak of hostilities. NBC canceled a hockey game to put on an Associated Press teletype in action, commentators and maps. CBS, normally silent on Sunday nights, set up a special transmission” (*News-Free Press*). Anticipating FDR’s “date which will live in infamy” speech, which was broadcast the next day, Kefauver said: “It was a dastardly and treacherous attack. Japan brought the war on in a most insidious way and with criminally malicious intent. There is, of course, nothing for us to do but to immediately declare war and lick them. The honor and survival of America is at stake. We must and will meet the challenge with complete national unity.”

Among those answering the galvanization call was television. In early 1942, stations in New York, Philadelphia and Los Angeles began supplying airtime for civilian defense programs. As for radio, on Jan. 23, 1942, AP’s Butterfield wrote: “Full aid to the army and navy in any possible technical manner has been agreed upon by radio manufacturing and research organizations in the country.” Following the World War I precedent, “The agreement, as

submitted in Washington, is in the form of a recommendation for a pool of information on all inventions and developments in construction of communication, signaling, remote control, navigation and direction-finding apparatus” (*News-Free Press*). In terms of programming, radio spun the top-ranking tunes “Don’t Sit Under the Apple Tree (With Anyone Else But Me)” (1942), “Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition!” (1943) and “G.I. Jive” (1944), while also offering regularly scheduled programming such as NBC’s 26-part “For This We Fight” series (1943).¹⁰ The film industry’s patriotic offerings included *Remember Pearl Harbor* (1942), *This Is the Army* (1943), *Rosie the Riveter* (1944) and *The Story of G.I. Joe* (1945). Movie and radio stars, among them Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra and Dinah Shore, entertained the troops both over the air and in person. In addition, actor Mickey Rooney, CBS President William S. Paley, RCA President David Sarnoff and bandleader Glenn Miller – bandleader whose “Chattanooga Choo Choo” led the hit parade at the time of the Pearl Harbor attack – joined the list of luminaries serving in the armed forces.

Kefauver, too, “offered his services with the United States armed forces wherever desired.” His bid was declined, on the grounds that his governmental service was vital in its own right. On January 31, 1943, AP’s Max Hall wrote that Kefauver was to work as a busboy at Washington’s old Belasco Theater, where he was to “cheerfully clear away the dirty dishes for the boys of the fighting services who come to the canteen to eat a free meal, relax and be entertained” (*Times*). But by and large, his sacrifice apparently took the form of postponed ambitions. In May 1942, he told the *News-Free Press*, “I am not considering and have made no plans concerning any office other than the one I now hold” – translation: He was not yet a candidate for the U.S. Senate. Broadcasting also saw its momentum temporarily checked to some

¹⁰ Whitburn, *Pop Memories 1890-1954: The History of American Popular Music*, 654, 655.

extent. Certainly, radio during that period did attain its greatest heights as a news medium, becoming “an intimate window on the world, a peep show in which the American audience participated without being hurt.”¹¹ But that audience did suffer in another way, as, effective April 22, 1942 – when radio sets in the U.S. numbered roughly 60 million – the government prohibited manufacture of radios for civilian use, and mandated “conversion of the entire radio industry to war production before mid-November.” (*Times*). Consequently, Butterfield wrote in April 1944, “There aren’t as many radio listeners as there used to be,” for “the market has been depleted of new sets” (*News-Free Press*). All those restrictions and shortages applied to television as well, and in May 1942, the FCC effectively pushed that medium to the back burner once again, lowering from 15 to four the minimum programming hours required of stations each week (*News-Free Press*). Then, in August 1942, the War Production Board “announced controls which will limit the movie industry to the amount of films used last year,” AP reported (*Times*). Of course, hardship is a relative concept, especially when considering the tens of thousands who gave the last full measure of devotion. Movie actress Carole Lombard “lost her life in the service of her country” January 16, 1942, when her plane crashed en route from a defense bond drive. On December 15, 1944, Miller, by then an Army major, presumably was killed when his plane disappeared over the English Channel.¹² And on August 12, 1944, Lieutenant Joseph P. Kennedy Jr., eldest son of the former U.S. ambassador to Great Britain, died during a television-guided torpedo mission, when his plane’s payload prematurely detonated over the English Channel.

¹¹ Herron, *Miracle of the Air Waves: A History of Radio*, 153-155.

¹² Whitburn, *Pop Memories 1890-1954: The History of American Popular Music*, 654.

With this, the mantle of standard-bearer was thrust upon the clan's second-born son, who would go on to harness video's figuratively explosive political potential.¹³

Strengthened standing and prospects somewhat quietly were achieved by Kefauver throughout the war's duration, notwithstanding his holding pattern in Congress' lower chamber (to which he was re-elected in 1942 and 1944). To keep in touch with his constituency, he recorded "Sunday talks on latest happenings in Washington," which aired weekly on WDOD starting March 8, 1942 (*News-Free Press*). National exposure came via occasional appearances on network broadcasts, with such topics as "Should Congress Be Streamlined?" (*News-Free Press*, February 22, 1944) and "Should Peace Treaties Be Ratified by Majority Vote of Both Houses of Congress?" (*Times*, October 19, 1944). Beginning in spring 1942, Kefauver perennially – and successfully – led House opposition to the efforts of a fellow Tennessean, U.S. Senator Kenneth D. McKellar, to make TVA subject to patronage considerations.¹⁴

In January 1943, Kefauver urged suspension of the House Un-American Activities Committee's "reckless" efforts to root out communists (*News-Free Press*).¹⁵ In July 1943, AP's Max Hall wrote that during the 78th Congress, which had begun the previous January, Kefauver continued his outspoken support of New Deal agencies such as TVA and the Farm Security Administration. "But he, as well as all the other Tennesseans in both houses, voted to override

¹³ Gary R. Edgerton, *The Columbia History of American Television* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2007), 72.

¹⁴ Fontenay, *Estes Kefauver: A Biography*, 106-108.

¹⁵ Incidentally, that very panel's agenda in 1938 was supported by testimony that "Almost everyone in Hollywood has been signed up for one of these united front organizations except Mickey Mouse and Snow White" (Associated Press, "'Boring' Plans Of 'Reds' Told," *The Chattanooga Times*, Aug. 23, 1938). But military objectives then compelled Hollywood to turn out pro-Soviet pieces such as *Our Russian Front* (ad blurb: "See the heroism of men and women fighting on our side"), *Miss V From Moscow*, *Chetniks, the Fighting Guerrillas*, *Mission to Moscow*, "The Battle of Russia" (Part 5 of Frank Capra's seven-part *Why We Fight* propaganda series) and *Song of Russia* (as

President Roosevelt's veto of the Connally-Smith Anti-Strike Bill," Hall said, adding that Kefauver "made many speeches and took part in a few rough-and-tumble debates in which he didn't bother to wear kid gloves. Also, he expanded his committee work, being appointed to the House Small Business Committee, in addition to his regular assignment on the Judiciary Committee" (*Times*). Speaking of the latter body, the *Times*' Adolph Shelby Ochs wrote in January 1944 that "Three Southern Democrats and three Republicans, under the chairmanship of Rep. Estes Kefauver, compose the House Judiciary Subcommittee appointed today to investigate charges of corruption against two Federal district judges in the Middle District of Pennsylvania. The subcommittee will report recommendations as to whether impeachment proceedings shall be brought against Judges Albert W. Johnson and Albert L. Watson, both Republicans." Years later, Kefauver said, "Through this work" – which resulted in Johnson's resignation, while Watson was found guilty of "no actions which would indicate that he is incapable or improper as a judge" – "I also became associated with some of the leading young criminal lawyers. We went into interstate crime to see what effect it was having on the government." And so was rekindled the spark first lit during Kefauver's days as a Chattanooga lawyer (see Page xx).

A brilliant postwar future was predicted for radio and TV well in advance of the conflict's conclusion. In January 1943, even as the industry was occupied with turning out "battle equipment" – e.g., radar, which AP's E.V.W. Jones that same year called "the wonder weapon of the war" (*News-Free Press*) – AP reported that, just as in World War I, "engineers say what is being learned can't but help considerably in improving civilian apparatus later on" (*News-Free Press*). In June 1943, Butterfield wrote of RCA research expert Ralph R. Beal's

shown in *Chattanooga Times* ads from Aug. 2, 1942; June 15, 1944; June 25, 1944; and *News-Free Press* ads from Jan. 11, 1943; Sept. 23, 1943; and Jan. 27, 1944).

expectation that “postwar radio pictures will use camera tubes greatly improved in sensitivity, refined to the point where objects can be picked up with ordinary illumination” (*News-Free Press*). As for economic outlook, Butterfield wrote in November 1943 that General Electric’s W.R. David “looks forward to the time when he expects at least 500 FM stations, compared to today’s 50 or so, and a hundred television stations, against nine at present, will be functioning on regular schedules” (*News-Free Press*). And in March 1944, Butterfield wrote:

Tom Joyce of RCA, who has been making quite a few speeches directing attention to postwar television, says it shouldn’t take too long for picture sets to get on the market when peace comes.

“At best it will require several months or a year after the war for the industry to hit its stride,” he said. “As far as a nation-wide television system is concerned, that should come into being before the first postwar blush of prosperity begins to fade.

“If television is to step into the breach at that time, its expansion must begin immediately after the war. And substantial delay will prove a disservice to American industry, to labor, to agriculture and to the public.” (*News-Free Press*)

None of which was to say that the TV sector had any intention of biding its time indefinitely. As of February 15, 1943, Butterfield wrote: “approximately 7,200 television receivers continue available for operation in the five areas of the country where transmitters are functioning under a limited wartime schedule. ... Three stations continuing operation in New York are on the air about nine hours a week, that in Schenectady about 10 hours, Philadelphia and Chicago four hours each and Los Angeles six hours” (*News-Free Press*). In October of that year, Butterfield reported: “Both NBC and CBS, which operate WNBT and WCBW, respectively, and which in recent months have confined their telecasts primarily to motion pictures, are showing signs of renewed attention to the future. ... The third New York station, Dumont’s W2XWV (established spring 1939), is maintaining its schedule of weekly live studio shows, the only one doing so. Films are also included. Occasionally special telecasts are added”

(*News-Free Press*).¹⁶ For Big Apple viewers, non-routine programming noted by Butterfield included “the first film premiere by television, ... the short feature, ‘Patrolling the Ether,’ (which) dramatized story of the radio intelligence division of (the) FCC” (April 1944); news of the D-Day invasion (June 1944); delayed film of the Republican and Democratic national conventions (June and July 1944, respectively); and coverage of election returns (November 1944).

With the war winding down, Roosevelt on April 13, 1945, was scheduled to broadcast a Jefferson Day address from Warm Springs, Georgia, while Kefauver was to deliver such an address to a private audience in Gadsden, Alabama. Neither talk came to pass, however, as the president died the day before, prompting the congressman to return to the nation’s capital. Whether fittingly or ironically, after 12 years in which the president appeared in 302 all-network programs, his funeral was not broadcast. On April 16, Harry S. Truman’s foreign policy statement to Congress was also his first broadcast as president. Kefauver was laudatory, while the “experts” said the new chief executive “was ‘easy to listen to, that his diction was good. They thought that, while his microphone presence was somewhat in contrast to that of the late President Roosevelt, described as ‘master of radio technique,’ it would improve with increased use of the air,” Butterfield wrote (*News-Free Press*). On May 1, Hamburg radio reported that Hitler had died while fighting “up to his last breath against Bolshevism” (*News-Free Press*). One week later, Butterfield wrote: “History in the making was to be heard in homes all over the land as the networks recorded the Allied world’s observance of May 8 as V-E Day.” And in addition to extended radio coverage, “Television joined in, the NBC station in New York carrying its

¹⁶ Jeff Kisseloff, *The Box: An Oral History of Television, 1920-1961* (New York, NY: Viking, 1995), 64.

longest telecast on record, from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. The CBS and Dumont stations also had special programs.” Left with only Japan standing in the way of “inevitable victory,” the United States on August 6 unleashed “Little Boy” upon Hiroshima. That same day, a *News-Free Press* headline read, “Kefauver Says New U.S. Bomb ‘Argues’ Peace: Atomic Missile Another Reason to End Wars, Solon Declares.” On August 9, “Fat Man” leveled Nagasaki, and the news was televised via DuMont’s nearly 4-month-old New York-Washington-Philadelphia network.

The next day, the *News-Free Press* reported Kefauver’s assertion that “It would be foolhardy on our part to accept Japan’s current surrender terms that demand preservation of (Japanese Emperor) Hirohito’s power – and leave a situation to ferment and build up to new trouble.” Yet Hirohito stayed after he, on August 14, “told the Japanese people by radio that ‘the enemy has begun to employ a new and most cruel bomb,’ and should Japan continue to fight ‘it would lead to the total extinction of human civilization,’” AP reported (*Times*). V-J Day brought a veritable television bonanza in New York: “NBC ran approximately 15 hours, while CBS was on for two and one-half hours,” Butterfield wrote. “Only NBC had the apparatus to take outside scenes, having set up two cameras in the Times Square area to view the celebrating crowds, both day and night. A floodlight made night scenes almost as good as day. An attempt at tele-interviews had to be abandoned because of the crowd’s over-enthusiasm in trying to get before the camera” (*News-Free Press*). That same day, the *Times*’ Fred Hixson reported, “The selection of Gen. Douglas MacArthur as the supreme commander in Japan for surrender and occupation ‘is the logical choice,’ Rep. Estes Kefauver of the Third Tennessee Congressional District said.” And it was MacArthur who, on September 2 (Tokyo time), presided over the surrender ceremonies, broadcast from the USS Missouri, that brought World War II to a close (*News-Free Press*).

With the world at peace, and their own nation unsurpassedly powerful, Americans looked forward to unimpeded progress. But the reality turned out to be rather more ambiguous. The movie business continued to flourish, enjoying record-high attendance numbers in 1946.¹⁷ And the radio and television industries, freed from governmental restrictions, eagerly resumed courting civilian markets. Yet by July 22, 1948, a malaise had settled, as described in *The Chattanooga Times* by the New York Times News Service's Murray Schumach:

Trapped between rising costs and shrinking attendance, the nation's entertainment industry has been squeezed steadily until it is now well on the way down to its prewar status. The present decline, a survey indicates, is beyond that of last summer's lull and may be the most serious manifestation of a trend that set in 18 months ago.

Domestic boxoffice (*sic*) volume of movies is reported to have fallen between 7 and 12 per cent this year from the same period in 1947. ...

Many radio stars are fighting salary cuts

Television has thus become virtually the only major entertainment field – with the possible exception of some concert programs – to show continued growth. Yet, despite the accelerated pace of Video's progress it has not yet begun operating at a profit.

In 1946, Kefauver's political stock was sufficiently high that he once again weighed running for the Senate. But he concluded the time still was not right, faced as he would be with the task of attempting to unseat the veteran McKellar. So Kefauver sought a fifth House term.

On March 5, 1946, Winston Churchill's "iron curtain" speech, broadcast nationally from Fulton, Missouri, signaled the start of the "Cold War." In his own radio campaign, Kefauver's Democratic primary opponent, William F. "Pup" McWhorter, seized upon the resultant anti-communist sentiment, saying on July 30 that the incumbent stood for "a Sovietized America" (*Times*). Nevertheless, Kefauver swept to victory in the August and November elections. The "Red scare" proved truly problematic for filmdom, however. In fall 1947, HUAC held hearings to investigate claims that "Hollywood is crawling with Communists" (*News-Free Press*), and

¹⁷ Bohn, Stromgren and Johnson, *Light and Shadows: A History of Motion Pictures*, 310-319.

ultimately the House voted contempt citations against “10 Hollywood script writers, directors and producers who refused to say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ when asked whether they were Communists” (*Times*). Subsequent films, including *A Foreign Affair* and, naturally, *The Iron Curtain*, both from 1948, included “commie” bad guys (*Times*).

Another growing concern, juvenile delinquency, underlay Federal Bureau of Prisons Director James V. Bennett’s complaint that “Young people who listen to radio crime mysteries normally make the criminal the hero instead of the cop,” AP reported (*Times*). In the Kefauver household, radio’s impact was felt via Ray Noble and Buddy Clark’s 1947 hit tune “Linda.” daughter Eleanor “was so taken with it that she decided to adopt the name for herself. She refused to answer to ‘Eleanor’ at all until at last everyone – family, friends and newspapers – surrendered, and ‘Linda’ she became.” (The name later evolved into “Lynda,” then “Lindsay.”)¹⁸

Most strongly attesting to the medium’s enduring popularity were production figures, which in 1946 “reached an all-time high of more than 15 million, as per Radio Manufacturers Association reports. This included 181,485 combination FM sets,” Butterfield wrote (*News-Free Press*). And much excitement indeed did center on frequency modulation, which, FM Association President Everett L. Dillard predicted, “will move up alongside standard radio in big business ranks in 1948.” As reported by AP, “Dillard says the number of FM stations, which zoomed from 48 to 370 in 1947, will pass the 1,000 mark by the end of the year. ... Of equal importance, Dillard expects 5,000,000 FM sets to reach the public this year, compared with 1,000,000 in 1947, greatly increasing the audience for the static-less, high fidelity form of

¹⁸ Whitburn, *Pop Memories 1890-1954: The History of American Popular Music*, 656; Fontenay, *Estes Kefauver: A Biography*, 126-127.

broadcasting” (*Times*). In Chattanooga, where 6,000 FM receivers reportedly were sold in 1947, the city’s first such station, WVUN, began operation March 29, 1948 (*Times*).

Kefauver’s final months in the House included his being named one of 14 finalists for *Collier’s* magazine’s two annual awards for outstanding service in Congress (*Times*). He continued to advocate for TVA; proposed “a constitutional amendment abolishing electoral votes and establishing in their stead Federal votes, which would be divided in each state according to the proportionate popular vote” (*Times*); wrote the book *A Twentieth Century Congress*, which advocated reorganization of the national legislature (*News-Free Press*); and functioned as chairman of the of a House subcommittee “formed to investigate the effect of monopolies on the competitive position of small businesses” (*Times*). Meanwhile, in May 1948 a decades-long process culminated as “the Supreme Court told the billion-dollar movie industry that it would have to think up new ways to sell its films. ... The court found that the present method of selling films had set up a cross-grid of monopolies which siphoned the ‘cream of the business’ right into the hands of eight big movie companies, and into the hands of the bigger theater chains which were willing to play ball with the big eight” (*Times*).

Television’s own “uncertain future” was clouded by questions of technical standards, geographic reach, affordability and profitability, as well as hostility from the movie industry, whose producers and exhibitors judged the small screen a “threat to their existence.” Thus, film companies for the most part refused to grant the small screen access to their stars or archival stock (*Times*).¹⁹ Such difficulties notwithstanding, TV continued its infiltration, in the process achieving dramatically elevated presence in Kefauver’s milieu. “Congress made its bow in

television today,” AP reported on January 3, 1947. “The opening session of the House of Representative was placed on the air for two hours. ... The first congressional program was carried in black-and-white television picture to one Washington station, WTTG, and by television cable to Philadelphia and New York” (Times). Three days later, Truman’s State of the Union address was televised from the House chamber.

Having viewed these two historic presentations, Butterfield was moved to comment: “Television as a factor in depicting the national Government in action already has shown that it can do a much better job than broadcasting. ... The mere fact that one can sit before a receiver in New York and see into the capitol (*sic*) at Washington is a factor in itself. But television does something that mere sound broadcasting fails to accomplish. It dramatizes for the eye scenes that hardly can be turned into an adequate description for the ear alone, no matter how expert the announcer” (*News-Free Press*).

On October 6, as reported by AP, the president’s “call for food sacrifice as an American ‘contribution to peace’” was “the first television broadcast in history from the executive mansion” AP said (*Times*). The set Truman had installed in the White House the preceding July (as reported by AP but not mentioned in the Chattanooga papers) was among the roughly 130,000 sold from 1946 to ’47. That national figure – bolstered by “vitamin shots” such as baseball’s World Series and Joe Louis’ heavyweight bouts versus Billy Conn and Jersey Joe Walcott – brought ownership to just under 200,000 (*Times*). In the same time frame, the number of stations grew from eight to 18 (*Times*). On December 27, 1947, AP’s Wayne Oliver wrote: “The president of the Television Broadcasters Association predicts that within 10 years, possibly

¹⁹ Jean Meegan, Associated Press, “Television Industry Bogs On Daily Program Problem,” The Chattanooga Times, Dec. 22, 1946; Associated Press, “Amusement Field Has Video Jitters,” The

within five, television will blanket the nation to the same extent that radio does today. The TB head, J.R. Poppelle, tells this column that television will benefit greatly by radio's trail on the air waves and as a result, 'It's going to make much more rapid strides'" (*Times*). No great leap of faith was required, then, for AP to declare early the following January, "Television could very well look upon 1948 as its first 'boom year'" (*Times*).

Quite risky, on the other hand, was Kefauver's November 1947 pronouncement – delivered "over a WDOD network of 28 stations over the state" – that he was ready to launch his Senate campaign. Highly daunting was the challenge he faced, as his true opponent was not any one man, but rather a statewide Democratic machine. Memphis political boss E.H. Crump had held sway over Tennessee politics for close to two decades. So firmly entrenched was his organization that the *Times*, in a 1942, editorial, commented, "No weak candidate will ever break Ed Crump's power. Only the strongest man in the State could do it. That ought to be realized by now."²⁰ Kefauver's strength certainly was gaining, and Crump-aligned incumbent Tom Stewart did appear highly vulnerable in 1948, but this alone guaranteed nothing, for after Kefauver's entry, the "Red Snapper" hedged his bets, dropping Stewart and instead endorsing Circuit Judge John A. Mitchell of Cookeville.²¹ Still, Stewart did not drop out, and so was joined a three-way race that ranked as "one of the bitterest political campaigns" in state history (*Times*).²² Even while eschewing "Crumpism" as a campaign issue and instead sticking to his "peace and TVA"

Chattanooga Times, Nov. 28, 1948.

²⁰ "Mr. Crump's Power," The Chattanooga Times, May 23, 1942.

²¹ Fontenay, *Estes Kefauver: A Biography*, 131, 141

²² Fontenay, *Estes Kefauver: A Biography*, 141

platform, Kefauver as of May 22 was the “Man to Beat,” as per a *Times* headline.²³ So Crump made his fateful decision to enter the fray. Beginning June 10, major newspapers in Tennessee carried a full-page advertisement headlined “Estes Kefauver Assumes the Role of a Pet Coon.” Therein, Crump charged that the congressman’s supposedly cunning, communist-friendly conduct was analogous to the sneaky ways of the critter in question. Using a good defense as his best offense, Kefauver adopted a homespun spiel lauding the coon as “the most American of animals.” Punctuating the delivery was his boast that “I may be a pet coon, but I ‘ain’t’ Mr. Crump’s pet coon” (*Times*). On June 22, “The Estes Kefauver-for-senator campaign headquarters ... sent out a call for two coons,” to be named Davy Crockett and Daniel Boone (*Times*). Then, on June 25, while addressing a crowd of hundreds at the Peabody Hotel, on Crump’s home turf, Kefauver introduced the campaign trademark with which he forevermore was to be identified. As related by the *Times*: “After the introductions, the congressman arose, very formally recognized the chair and the audience, and then reached under the table, pulled out a ring-tailed coonskin cap and placed it on his head. He said nothing, but stood smiling. Laughter broke out – and then his wife arose and kissed him.” Added *Times* editor Alfred Mynders: “Nothing like it could be recalled Such a reception in Memphis for a man ‘bucking’ the Crump organization has never been heard of before.”

Though the moment was to take on legendary proportions, it was not televised, and thus was seen by no one outside the Peabody dining room. The Republican National Convention, however, concluded its televised run that very day, and the Democratic gathering received the same exposure in July. In the midst of the former event, the *Times* commented: “television shows up with painful precision all the slowness and ceremonious bunk with which we dress our

²³ Fontenay, *Estes Kefauver: A Biography*, 146;

conventions. The show was dreary and dull. A Hollywood director would have cut out nine-tenths of the convention coverage as shown on the television receivers, but there is no way to compress the televising of a news event. It must drag out its weary way.” The previous March, the Armed Services Committee hearings on universal military training had been televised by CBS, marking the first time the proceedings of such a Senate body were carried by the new medium (a development not mentioned in the Chattanooga papers).²⁴ Simultaneously, Kefauver wrote for *The American Magazine* an article titled “Let’s Cut Out These Congressional Vaudeville Shows,” wherein he suggested abolishing all special and select committees that might lend themselves to “headline-hunting” (*Times*). And headlines indeed were made by HUAC’s August 1948 hearings during which Alger Hiss and Whittaker Chambers testified under the “hot lights of television and movie cameras” (*Times*).²⁵

On August 6, 1948, an AP story in the *News-Free Press* carried the headline “Radio Audience Enticed Away by Television.” Still, for the time being at least, radio retained the top spot, and it was via this medium that Republican presidential candidates Thomas E. Dewey and Harold Stassen conducted a widely heard debate in May 1948. Duly inspired, Kefauver invited Stewart to debate him, even offering to “meet the expenses of the radio time out of my own pocket or I will split the expense with you” (*Times*). Stewart declined just the same. But on July 28, a non-campaign-related debate, on Mutual’s *Opinionaire* program, gave Kefauver free national exposure. He urged “that the spotlight be turned on corporation pricing policies to curb

²⁴ “On the Radio Today,” *The New York Times*, March 30, 1948, in ProQuest Historical Newspapers (accessed August 5, 2014). **???**

²⁵ “Programs on the Air: Wednesday,” *The New York Times*, Aug. 25, 1948, in ProQuest Historical Newspapers (accessed August 5, 2014).

inflation,” while Republican Frank B. Keefe (R-Wis.) “urged tighter money controls to the same end” (*Times*).

Four days before the August 5, 1948, primary, the *Times* commented: “Whereas six weeks ago Mr. Kefauver seemed doomed to be an unknown to large sections of this state, he has been built up into a statewide favorite. Tennesseans love him for the enemies he has made.” That love was sufficient to propel him to victory, with a 42 percent plurality. Kefauver – alongside gubernatorial candidate Gordon Browning – had “shattered” the Crump mystique.²⁶ Afterward, Charles L. Bartlett, the *Times*’ Washington bureau reporter since 1947, wrote, “close observers of the recent Kefauver victory, including Kefauver himself, have already yielded that measure of credit to the funny old coonskin cap he wore before the voters. They say it provided that element of showmanship and color that were needed to put him out in front ... in these days of varied and instantaneous communications.” Speaking of which, even as Chattanooga stayed abreast of the general election campaign next waged by Kefauver, their attention likewise was drawn to events taking place in a neighboring state. In September, Atlanta, Georgia’s first TV station, WSB, signed on. And though originating from a transmitter more than 100 miles distant, the signal, it quickly was determined, potentially could be seen by “several thousand residents” of Chattanooga’s higher elevations, such as Signal and Lookout mountains and Missionary Ridge. In addition, optimistic projections held that Chattanooga, despite its having “not a single application ... filed with FCC,” would have a station in “18 months to two years.” But on September 30, 1948, “The Federal Communications Commission ... announced that it is temporarily suspending approval of any new television stations in order to ‘polish’ the service already authorized,” the *News-Free Press* reported. “The pause in the further expansion of

²⁶ Fontenay, *Estes Kefauver: A Biography*, 152.

television broadcasting at this time finds a total of 123 stations authorized, of which 37 are actually on the air. The remainder hold construction permits and are in various stages of development.” Some video fans perhaps were reassured by FCC Chairman Wayne Coy’s estimate that the “freeze” was to last “possibly six months” (*News-Free Press*). But Chattanooga’s time as a “fringe” viewing area was to last much longer than that. In the meantime, on November 2, 1948, WSB viewers, wherever found, were treated to “full election returns,” highlighted by Truman’s upset of Dewey. In a much less dramatic affair, Kefauver defeated former Republican National Committee Chairman B. Carroll Reece by a nearly 2-to-1 margin.

And so, on at least two counts, postwar ambiguity subsided considerably. “Television (in 1948) emerged as a dynamic force of yet unknown proportions,” AP reported in January 1949 (*Times*). While “in the future – well, there is no limit to the career of Mr. Estes Kefauver,” the *Times* commented in November 1948. The man and the medium, though yet to make one another’s acquaintance, clearly had much in common.

CHAPTER 3: MAN AGAINST CRIME

On January 20, 1949, a record-breaking 10 million American watched on television while Truman for the second time was inaugurated as president (*Times*). Seventeen days previous, “a group of 27 friends and relatives who had traveled from Tennessee for the occasion” had watched while Kefauver was sworn in as Tennessee’s junior U.S. senator. And just as Harry continued to “give ’em hell,” Estes promptly resumed his outspoken espousal of causes he fancied. For example, in his first year of upper-chamber service, Kefauver advocated for electoral reform, just as when he was a representative; he undertook “dedicated and determined” sponsorship of Atlantic Union, “a plan for federal union of 15 ‘Atlantic democracies’”; and he spoke in favor of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.¹ Still, “he had not found an adequate vehicle for his crusading tendencies.”²

Law and order (or opposition thereto) was by this point a staple of entertainment media offerings. Complementing the film fare noted in previous chapters, radio since 1935 had aired the weekly drama *Gang Busters*. Slightly more than two years after the criminal-as-hero complaint was leveled (see Page xx), “realistic action series” *Dragnet* debuted as an audio program, on June 3, 1949.³ And on television, the detective shows *Martin Kane*, *Private Eye* and *Man Against Crime* premiered in September and October 1949, respectively.⁴ Simultaneously, in real life, “clean-up campaigns” were “a major

¹ Fontenay 328, 333

² Fontenay 163

³ Brooks and Marsh 282

⁴ Brooks and Marsh 620

preoccupation of most law enforcement agencies,” as reflected in the AP story headlined “Battle on Crime Nation-Wide One: Gambling, Organized Vice at Present Are Particular Targets for the Law” (*Times*). For Kefauver, who “had a keen sense of the dramatic and a rather accurate sense of what made news,” these must have been encouraging developments; in late 1948, still intrigued by the Albert W. Johnston inquiry (see Page xx) and its attendant “glimpse of links between the judiciary and the underworld,” the then-senator-elect already had hit upon some notion of conducting a crime investigation.⁵ A few months later, *Washington Post* Publisher Philip Graham independently concluded that a senatorial probe of nationwide crime syndicates was needed, and that Kefauver was just the man to lead such an endeavor. Graham’s key selling point – “Estes, don’t you want to be Vice President?” – may have helped persuade him. After some deliberation, Kefauver decided he had found his crusade.⁶

On January 5, 1950, as reported by the *Times* (but not the *News-Free Press*):

Sen. Estes Kefauver asked today that the Senate authorize an investigation of national gambling and crime syndicates to determine whether municipal governments are being menaced by their operations.

If Kefauver’s resolution is approved, the investigation will be conducted by a judiciary subcommittee probably headed by Kefauver himself. Such a role would add his name to the long list of those who have gained the national limelight by challenging the lords of the underworld.

The investigation would spotlight the activities of well-known figures like Frank Costello and Frank Erickson.

On the heels of this proposal, *Times* Washington correspondent Charles L. Bartlett observed:

⁵ Fontenay 164-165

⁶ Fontenay 164-165

A hard knot of Tennesseans, ranging from rosy-eyed dreamers to beady-eyed politicians, is already looking eagerly toward the 1952 Democratic convention and the possibility that Estes Kefauver may provide Tennessee with its first Vice-President since Andrew Johnson was elected in 1864.

As premature as this vision may seem, it has already been glimpsed by at least one other man – Kefauver himself. The latter, who probably conceived the idea when he was back in grammar school, has been maintaining his efforts toward national renown at a constantly accelerating pace and with ever increasing success.

His latest brain child, a Senate investigation into syndicate gambling, will, if it is authorized by the Senate, inevitably place him on the front pages of every newspaper and in the newsreels of every theater.

Television, a comparatively untested variable, did not factor into the speculation.

Still, this “lusty newcomer” was coming into its own. Truman’s inauguration day viewership, for example, was made possible by the January 11, 1949, joining of the AT&T Bell System’s East Coast and Midwest television facilities; as a result, network television’s reach now extended from the Atlantic to the Mississippi (*Times*). As Lindsay Kefauver recalls, her family’s Washington home had a television set no later than 1950. And in February of that year, AP’s Jack Adams’ reported that in “a survey of 400 set-owning homes in the nation’s capital,” the “pre-television average of motion picture attendance of 4.51 times per month had dropped to 1.27 times a month, a decline of 72 per cent.” Similarly, the AP writer continued, “Daytime radio-listening time dropped from an average 3 hours and 36 minutes to 2 hours and 54 minutes; nighttime listening declined from an average 3 hours and 42 minutes to 24 minutes” (*Times*). With TV on the verge of becoming “big time,” radio stars crossed over or made plans to do so, as reported by AP in April 1949 (*Times*).

In his personal life, Estes Kefauver apparently stood aloof from these changes. His eldest daughter says he regularly viewed neither big-screen movies nor TV, and, as

already noted, he was not a frequent radio listener. But professionally, Kefauver maintained an audio presence; in Chattanooga, on June 15, 1949, his weekly show aired opposite the last radio presentation of Milton Berle's *Texaco Star Theater*, and that same year, the senator contributed to special broadcasts made by WVUN and the new WDOD-FM (*Times*). And he, too, transitioned to video. On February 1, 1949, Kefauver made what evidently was his first scheduled network TV appearance, on ABC's *Town Hall Meeting of the Air*, during which he discussed his support for NATO (*Times*). The following January – four days after AP's Cynthia Lowry wrote, "The trouble with television, the armchair experts say, is that it hasn't built any of its own personalities" – Kefauver was among "a group of senators and representatives who showed up for an 'audition' at the Willard Hotel in Washington. The lawmakers are competing with cabinet members, fellows from the Supreme Court and diplomatic corps for a spot on the big show," i.e., the February 2 "V.I.P." edition of NBC's *The Original Amateur Hour* (*News-Free Press*).

So Kefauver already had proved he was not camera-shy. Still, there is no evidence that TV entered his or anyone else's mind relative to the crime probe as it took shape. Just the same, at a time when "Chattanooga Shoe Shine Boy" happened to be radio's most popular tune, the Chattanooga lawmaker's undertaking spurred abundant hometown interest, as attested by newspaper headlines – "Gaming Bid to Senate" (*Times*, via AP, February 28, 1950), "Kefauver Due to Head Probe of Crime in U.S." (*Times*, via AP, March 24, 1950), "Senate Hands Special Group Gaming Probe" (*Times*, via AP, April 12, 1950), "Demos 'Packing' Crime Committee" (*News-Free Press*, via "N-FP wires," April 13, 1950), "M'Grath Says Sports Abused by Gamblers" (*News-Free Press*, via "N-FP

wires,” April 17, 1950), “Kefauver Asks Broad Inquiry” (*News-Free Press*, via UP, April 29, 1950), “Kefauver Says Senate’s Crime Probes Have Spurred Clamp-Downs in Cities” (*Times*, via UP’s George E. Reedy, May 7, 1950) – in that city and around the country.⁷ Preliminary developments culminated on May 8, when the *Times* revealed that Kefauver officially had been named to head the committee, which also was to include Herbert O’Conor (D-Md.), Lester C Hunt (D-Wyo.), Charles W Tobey (R-N.H.) and Alexander Wiley (R-Wis.). (The latter two, incidentally, earlier had made news through their interest in TV-related matters; Tobey in 1948 charged that “the public is being ‘bamboozled’ into buying television sets which, he said, will be obsolete in a few years”; Wiley in 1949, following disclosure that Russia had detonated its own nuclear bomb, “proposed ... that Congress face up to the threat of an atomic attack by carrying on its business in the future by television” [*Times*].)

On May 31, 1950, in an article rife with both prescience and irony, the North American Newspaper Alliance’s Cecil Holland wrote:

Kefauver would like to conduct (the public hearing) in something of a judicial manner – without the klieg lights and ‘circus’ atmosphere that have marked so many past congressional hearings.

Just how that can be done remains to be seen. But the senator believes arrangements can be worked out that will avoid the flamboyant trimmings, without interfering with the public’s desire to see and know what is going on.

His work in directing the investigation will be Kefauver’s first major test as a senator – supplying a real clue, perhaps, as to where he is going politically” (*Times*).

Geographically, the first place the committee went was Miami, where Kefauver and Hunt, accompanied by Chief Counsel Rudolph Halley, held hearings May 26-27 (*Times*). As 1950 played out, subsequent sessions in Washington, St. Louis, Kansas City, Chicago,

⁷ Whitburn 657

Philadelphia and Tampa regularly were covered by the *Times* and, the *News-Free Press* aside, other American newspapers; resultant headlines – e.g., in the July 7 *Times*, “Capone’s Gang Still at Work: Virgil Peterson Testifies They and Costello Ring Rule Underworld,” from Harold R. Hinton’s New York Times News Service article – competed for space along with, for example, as-seen-on-TV developments related to the Korean War, which began June 25.

On that same date, in a development that *perhaps* had nothing to do with the crime probe, the 1935 film ‘*G*’ *Men* returned to Chattanooga. Similarly, a double feature of the “Top Gangster Hits” *Dillinger* (1945) and *The Gangster* (1947) showed there August 20 (*Times*). Much harder to dismiss was *The Underworld Story*, which opened July 26, with its ad boast “The headline story of the year! Operations of crime syndicate revealed!” (*Times*). Unmistakably non-coincidental was the timing of *711 Ocean Drive*. This “daring gambling expose,” which premiered July 19, had a foreword delivered by Wiley (*Times*). Clearly, then, the intrigue surrounding the probe already was sufficiently strong that the struggling film industry had taken notice, with an eye toward cashing in.⁸

Also tied to the crime probe was Kefauver’s first film appearance, a comparatively low-key production called *A Senator’s Report to the People on the Eighty-First Congress*. With Kefauver kept busy by the investigation, this 30-minute film was “shown in county courthouses all over the state ... as a substitute,” and “As far as can be ascertained this is the first such use of the celluloid media in politics,” Bartlett wrote. The report’s October 3 Chattanooga debut was at a public library, but “In Memphis and any place else that has a television studio by that time, the film will be televised,” he

⁸ May 26, 1950: Headline for AP story: “Movie Attendance Drops 20,000,000”

continued. As a matter of fact, Bartlett wrote, “Courage to execute the idea, which was original with Kefauver and (administrative assistant Charles) Neese, sprang no doubt from the success which the senator has had as a television performer during the past two years. Despite the briefness of his tenure in the Senate, he has become one of the body’s most sought-after video stars” (*Times*).

For the most part, television in 1950 remained much in-demand, occupying the simultaneous roles of popular novelty (in the *News-Free Press*: “TV Interferes With Baths of Ronald Colman,” UP, March 23; “TV Costs Jobs Of Bus Drivers,” UP, May 18; “TV Keeps Low Income Adults Home at Night,” International News Service, May 23) and fledgling juggernaut (in the *Times*: “TV Shares Climb for New Records,” AP, April 18; “TV Set Production May Reach 9,000,000,” AP, June 25; “Gallup Poll: Majority of Citizens Have Seen TV Show,” June 26; “Bell TV Network in 14 More Cities; 1 Private Hookup Lifts Total to 49,” AP, October 1). Uncertainty, where found, centered on the Korean situation (“TV Sets May ‘Go Blind’ If War Keeps On,” *News-Free Press* via UP, September 30) and, even more so, on a fierce internecine struggle pitting CBS against NBC and DuMont (in the *Times*: “Columbia’s Color TV Plan Picked as National System,” AP, October 12; “Color TV Battle Gains Momentum: Sides Line Up – Set Owners in the Middle – Dealers Says Sales Drop,” AP, October 22).

To whatever extent such considerations dimmed optimism, they were more than offset by official statistics; as reported by UP: “Frank M. Folson, president of the radio corporation of America, said ... there were 10,000,000 television sets in homes throughout the nation at the end of 1950. During 1950, he said, the American people spent \$1,500,000,000 for television sets, an increase of 100 per cent over 1949” (*News-*

Free Press). And so, as 1951 dawned, the television medium possessed something akin to critical mass, culturally speaking.

Still, when the crime committee held its first hearings of the new year, January 17-19 in Cleveland, Ohio, TV coverage remained “confined to short takes for use on regularly scheduled news programs.”⁹ Even so, just as “The Tennessee Waltz” at that very juncture dominated radio play lists, the Kefauver probe was seen to maintain its hold on the popular imagination. On January 21, the *Times* reported that the producer of *711 Ocean Drive* was developing a film called *The Kansas City Story*, “based on documented information obtained by the Senate Crime Investigating Committee.” Four days later, Humphrey Bogart’s *The Enforcer* premiered; in an angle overlooked by the Chattanooga papers, this “Bullet-Riddled Story of a Dynasty of Death Mob That Peddled Murder for a Price!” featured introductory comments by “none other than Senator Estes Kefauver of Tennessee” (*Chattanooga Times*, *New York Times*). Much stronger and longer-lasting ramifications, however, flowed from events that began to unfold that same January 25, as the committee shifted its operations to New Orleans. WDSU-TV approached Kefauver, asking permission to air the proceedings locally. Kefauver consented, and on January 26, the Big Easy was treated to what *Times Picayune* columnist Ed Brooks called “some of the most fascinating radio and television fare that we’ve encountered.” He continued:

The fascination seemed to be all over the city and radios and TV sets were glued to the Kefauver hearing. It was the evil sort of entrancement that makes you watch a poisonous snake.

But it had plenty of drama and humor and the testimony of some of the witnesses certainly was laughable, if you could forget the underlying reek of crime and corruption in high places. And as an educational program, bringing sordid facts out into the open, it hit a new high. ...

⁹ Fontenay 180

The TV coverage of the hearings, as the senator said himself, was the first time on record and, even more than radio (via WNOE), it brought out the full, bitter flavor of the testimony, for you could see the men who mouthed the answers the senator deplored. ...

WDSU-TV announced that they would televise one hour of the hearings Friday afternoon. But they cancelled (*sic*) all conflicting commercial programs and televised the hearings in full.

In short, the crime committee TV show was a hit. But it was a story missed by print media elsewhere in the country, Chattanooga included. A similar pattern ensued when the panel, presided over by O'Connor, moved on to Detroit; there, WWJ-TV and WJBK-TV followed and expanded upon WDSU's precedent, delivering "(f)ull-scale, continuous televising of the Crime Committee hearings" February 8-9.¹⁰ Again, audience reaction was overwhelmingly positive, as noted by *Detroit News* columnist Herschel Hart, who wrote: "Never before in the history of radio or TV have we seen interest reach the peak it did Thursday and Friday, in the telecast of the Kefauver committee hearings." And again, non-local media failed to take notice. Interest began to proliferate when the crime committee took its "amateur road show" to St. Louis.¹¹ On February 23, local station KSD-TV's signal was transmitted by coaxial line to Memphis' WCMT, "so Kefauver's home state might watch its favourite son."¹² The next day, the medium's incursion at last gained widespread notice when, as reported by *The Chattanooga Times* (via New York Time News Service), "James J. Carroll, nationally known betting commissioner, refused to testify at a Senate Crime Investigating Committee hearing ... on grounds that television invaded his constitutional right of privacy and subjected him to ridicule and

¹⁰ Garay 473

¹¹ Garay 474

¹² Doherty 364

embarrassment.” Ignorance underlay the statement “It was believed that this was the first test of the new modern means of communication to report a public hearing.” Unwittingly, then, a leitmotif was invoked when the NYTNS reporter wrote: “Televising of the hearing caused a stir in the city, where nearly every bar and tavern has a receiving set. Home viewers have reported being delighted by the show, which has been telecast for more than two hours each day.” Meanwhile, after the show wrapped up, a new notion, one that would be repeated as other major events transpired in years and decades to come, was proffered by *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch*: ““television has come of age with this broadcast.”” On a local level, the medium’s performance continued to impress once the hearings moved to California. After sessions February 27-28 in his city, *Los Angeles Times* columnist Walter Ames wrote, “KECA’s fine pictorial presentation of the recent Kefauver Crime Committee hearings from the State Building is the talk of television row these days.” And in San Francisco, where the panel met March 2-3, the *Chronicle’s* Terrence O’Flaherty wrote: “The fine pictorial presentation of the Kefauver Senate Crime Committee hearings (seen on both KGO-TV and KPIX) has drawn the biggest response of any single television performance in San Francisco’s TV history”; and in doing so, it “introduced the Bay Area to its first concrete example of the role TV is going to play in everyone’s future.” Nevertheless, at-large print media accounts reverted to form, ignoring the TV angle.

For a few days thereafter, casual inference might have suggested that the saga essentially had run its course. On March 4, a Bartlett column’s headline announced, “Sen. Kefauver Happy Crime Probe Nearing End.” In a cover story for its issue dated March 12, *Time* magazine referenced the committee’s “an all-but-final report on ten months of

sleuthing.” *Chattanooga Times* Editor Alfred Mynders praised that newsweekly for providing a “splendid and concise summary of the committee’s work”; and as an aside, he added, “In spite of the praise heaped on him no one can accuse the senator of biggin’ the crime story.” Yet the plot was about to thicken, and others soon would do some serious biggin’ on Kefauver’s behalf. On March 11, foreshadowing aplenty was seen in a Page One AP story headlined, “Crime Probers Take Hearings Into New York: Long Parade of Underworld Political Figures Due to Testify for Committee”:

The biggest and probably the most spectacular open hearing yet held by Sen. Estes Kefauver (Dem., Tenn.) and his Senate Crime Investigating Committee will begin Monday in New York. ...

Some 2,500,000 TV-owning New Yorkers will be able to watch the proceedings over any one of five stations. The proceedings are expected to be networked also to other parts of the nation.

In fact, the New York hearings, held March 12-16 and 19-21, were aired by five of the city’s seven television stations. With the Big Apple also being home to all four video networks, DuMont and ABC (the latter sponsored by *Time*) provided live telecasts, although they extended only to the Midwest, as the cable link still extended no farther than Omaha, Nebraska.¹³ Nevertheless, a record-shattering viewership estimated at 30 million confirmed that the committee had caught lightning in a bottle – or vacuum tube, as the case may be.¹⁴ The timing, it turned out, was utterly perfect. “A year or two earlier and there would have been no audience; a few years later, there might have been less

¹³ Garay 477,

http://books.google.com/books?id=J3fhcUnCC1AC&pg=PA116&lpg=PA116&dq=Time+sponsorship,+Kefauver+committee&source=bl&ots=tZeLUsh7ER&sig=crCUFpUFBjbt_mv98r6T0BoWuM&hl=en&sa=X&ei=v0zoU42pHtGGyATV34DYDg&ved=0CC8Q6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=Time%20sponsorship%2C%20Kefauver%20committee&f=false

¹⁴ “Gripping Drama of Crime Testimony Draws Estimated 30,000,000 to TV”

excitement – for people might have been more blasé.”¹⁵ But as it happened, they apparently were quite excited by what they saw. Reporting from the center of it all, *The New York Times*’ Jack Gould on March 13 wrote:

The television viewer at home and the hundreds who crowded around sets in bars and radio stores saw yesterday probably the most remarkable, absorbing and instructive day of video ever presented on the screen.

The opening session of the Senate Crime Investigating Committee was nothing less than a Hollywood thriller truly brought to life. For five and a half hours there were gripping and compelling drama and suspense in watching one of the seamier sides of national life spread out for all to see and hear. The quiet and almost matter of fact evolution of sensational developments was both a fascinating and educational experience. At times it was almost difficult to believe that it was real.

Gould’s movie-based analogy was ironic, given that televising of the New York sessions was said to have exacerbated erosion of big-screen attendance in some cities. But the frame of reference is so natural that subsequent consideration has bred more of the same. “(T)he criminals called to testify before the Kefauver committee seemed to have stepped from the screen of a screen of a Warner Bros. gangster film.”¹⁶ “Virginia Hill Hauser, moll of the late Benjamin ‘Bugsy’ Siegel, was a showstopper ... (a) brassy and glamorous presence who lent sex and flash to the otherwise gray sessions.”¹⁷ Costello, the underworld’s “Prime Minister” – who on March 13 refused to allow his face to be shown on TV, thereby leaving viewers with the “strangely hypnotic” image of his “nervously fiddling” hands – possessed a “gravelly voice (that) made an enduring impression, so much so that Marlon Brando reputedly later mimicked it in the title role of

¹⁵ Halberstam 191

¹⁶ Doherty 361

¹⁷ Doherty 366

The Godfather.”¹⁸ The chief protagonist, Kefauver, was “a sort of Southern Jimmy Stewart, the lone citizen-politician who gets tired of the abuse of government and goes off on his own to do something about it.”¹⁹

Beginning with the climactic New York adventure, the *News-Free Press* joined in providing daily reports of the committee’s activities; still, the television aspect somehow went unmentioned until March 19. The *Times*’ coverage remained more extensive and incisive, with Bartlett providing firsthand accounts that from the start acknowledged TV’s presence. On March 17, he sized up matters thusly:

A new television personality who wears glasses like Bobby Clark’s and has a big mouth like Milton Berle’s took over the video channels in a major way this week.

Sen. Estes Kefauver and his Senate Crime Investigating Committee provided the TV medium all through the week with a show that a number of reviewers termed the best yet and that was by far the biggest attraction in the big city. ...

With the energy for which he is noted, Sen. Kefauver set out to run both a good sideshow and a just tribunal. The television technicians with their blinding lights, the newsreel men with their noisy equipment, and the still photographers with their impudent flashbulbs were given the run of the place. The effect of this license in the tiny room in which the hearing opened was like setting off a string of Chinese firecrackers in a small box. When the scene was changed on Wednesday to a large courtroom, conditions improved, but the TV lights still seemed to have the flare of seven suns.

With this setting Kefauver and his colleagues fell into considerable hamming. ...

But from the start Kefauver’s performance as a TV senator and his deportment as a committee chairman were both excellent. His clear, even voice and gentle manner set him apart from the pompous Sen. Tobey and the redundant Sen. O’Connor. His gentleness and graciousness with the witnesses was made the more appealing by the way in which he became tough on occasion and by his readiness to stand up to anyone who threatened the dignity of the committee. With waspish Counsel Rudolph Halley there to do the chopping away at the witnesses, Kefauver could remain the poised statesman.

It was when he slipped into the role of prosecutor that he went amiss. ...

¹⁸ Doherty 366, Shogan 53

¹⁹ Halbertstam 191

But by and large Kefauver had become at week's end a great favorite with the cast TV audience.

With the committee on weekend recess March 18, Kefauver branched out a bit, himself submitting to "cross-examination" on the CBS panel game show *What's My Line?* Though identified after only three questions, he "brought down the house with his amusingly laconic answers" (*Times*). "Gripping real-life drama" resumed as the probe returned to Washington for one final round of open hearings, March 22, 24, 26 and 27. Along with three local stations, ABC and DuMont again televised the sessions.²⁰ And while the *Times* continued to point up that arrangement's impact on those in the committee room, larger perspective came from of a March 24 AP story headlined "Kefauver TV 'Show' Had Everything":²¹

Something big, unbelievably big and emphatic, smashed into the homes of millions of Americans ... when television cameras, cold-eyed and relentless, were trained on the Kefauver crime committee hearing

Nothing quite like it had ever happened, in this country or any other. What did happen? Why? And what's coming next?

A great many people – congressmen, educators, lawyers, politicians, businessmen, sociologists and certainly criminals – suddenly have been confronted with a fact not fully understood before. To some it is a threat, to others a more powerful weapon than anyone could have realized. Even the television industry itself is doing some heavy reassessing today.

Obviously, the giant didn't know his own strength (*Times*).

As for the chairman himself, syndicated columnist Walter Lippmann on April 3 wrote:

²⁰ Garay 479

²¹ ("Cleveland Witnesses Balk at TV; Under Bail," AP, March 27), in American living rooms ("Enthralled With TV; Lets His House Burn," AP, March 23) and elsewhere ("Hubbub Over Hearing Puzzles Foreigners," AP, March 23; "Sen. 'Keffowver' Has U.K. interest: Crime Investigation Draws Wide Attention – Britons Wish They Could See It," Martin Ochs, March 27);

“Sen. Kefauver is, no doubt, well aware that most of the work of his committee is likely to be remembered the longest because the hearings were broadcast by television. ...

Long after only the oldest reporters can still remember who Frank Costello was, or even Virginia Hill, Sen. Kefauver’s name may remain connected, like Lord Sandwich and a quick lunch, with the grandeur and the miseries of conducting public affairs in front of the television audience” (*Times*).

When noting just how thorough the *Times*’ coverage of the hearings’ TV angle had become, it is interesting to consider the ongoing plight of the publication’s video-craving readership segment. The new-channels “freeze” – whose upcoming end was announced by the FCC on the same day the televised D.C. sessions opened – had assured that “Except for a comparatively few cliff-dwellers or people with towering aerials, Chattanooga missed the big TV show in which our Mr. Kefauver starred” (*Times*). Some possibly were able to receive the signal from Nashville’s WSM-TV, which first aired the proceedings on March 16 (*Nashville Tennessean*), or from Birmingham’s WAFM-TV and WBRC-TV, starting March 19 and March 22, respectively (*Birmingham News*). But the most reliable reception apparently came from Atlanta, where WSB-TV until March 21 actually “was unable to carry the committee action because of limited cable space.” WAGA then came aboard no later than March 26 (*Atlanta Journal*). A more widely accessible presentation was Fox Movietone News’ *The Kefauver Crime Investigation*, which opened in Chattanooga April 3, five days after premiering in New York and Los Angeles. This 52-minute synopsis further demonstrated the box-office of the probe, and yet, “a glaring journalistic omission” is perpetrated, for “at no point does the newsreel feature film, in image or voice-over, reveal the fact that the (New York and Washington) hearings were the most avidly watched television event to date.”²²

²² Doherty 372-373

Such popularity notwithstanding, debate ensued as to whether TV's presence in legislative affairs was fitting and proper. As reported by AP, "The great majority of senators and congressmen, including the majority leaders of both parties, are opposed to televising the proceedings." But Tobey, along with New York Representative Jacob K. Javits, "suggested that some debates and hearings in Congress be televised. Tobey said it would be a good thing to let people see their Government at work." Kefauver, too, recommended "that as many congressional hearings as possible and some Senate sessions be televised," but then he reversed his stance somewhat. Saying, "Congress is a remarkable institution, but it can't run competition with Milton Berle," Kefauver shared his opposition to televising of regular sessions. Meanwhile, Wiley "said he will ask 'a thorough study of the various problems which have arisen.'"

The senator warned that "televising of hearings should not be allowed to degenerate into:

"A three-ring circus.

"A fourth-rate stage production with hamming and phony theatrics.

"A unjust inquisition of people under Klieg lights, particularly people who might not be able to testify properly under such conditions because of health reasons." (*Times*).

A more detached view came from syndicated columnist Thomas L. Stokes, who wrote: "Alert politicians already have realized that it's physical presence and acting that pay off in this televised world. With radio it was only the voice they had to acquire and cultivate. Now their faces show – and their figures. And there are some very unhandsome mugs and some very unshapely figures among our better public servants. What happens to them?" (*Times*).

For the duration of 1951, fate permitted Kefauver – whom *Time* described as "homely" and "raw-boned," actually – to bask uninterruptedly in the glow of his

newfound status as “a figure in the entertainment world.” And the mass media in turn continued capitalizing on his celebrity. On April 27, Mynders wrote:

(S)o great has been the impact of the television appearance of Senator Kefauver and the Senate Crime Committee that the networks have been imitating them lately in their fictional crime melodrama programs, notably, ‘Lights Out,’ the NBC-TV show, and ‘Suspense,’ the CBS-TV show. The NBC show, according to Television Critic John Crosby, found an actor who looked and talked remarkably like Senator Kefauver. And in the CBS ‘Suspense,’ a double for Senator Kefauver was also found (*Times*).

On June 7, the erstwhile syndicated TV series *Racket Squad* made its network debut, on CBS.²³ Two weeks after President Truman’s opening address at San Francisco’s Japanese peace treaty conference marked the “first telecast on a nation-wide basis,” the CBS police anthology series *Crime Syndicated* premiered, offering a unique enticement of its own: episodes narrated by Kefauver (although only on three occasions), Halley (18 times) and O’Conor (28 times).²⁴ On September 23, the Times reported that “Sen. Estes Kefauver has agreed to star in a motion picture about crime for a fee of \$100,000 which will be turned over to the Cordell Hull Foundation” (see Page xx). Making its bow October 17 was *The Mob*, a reputed depiction of “The Mob That Defied the Kefauver Committee!” (*News-Free Press*). Meanwhile, Kefauver’s “Crime in America,” a “personal account of the national crime investigation he conducted for 51 weeks,” became a best-selling book upon its July 11 release.

Yet for all the benefits that anti-corruption sentiment accrued to those men and media, equal and opposite was the reaction experienced elsewhere within Kefauver’s own Democratic Party. The same week as the celebrated New York hearings began, in March

²³ Brooks and Marsh, Pages 839-840

²⁴ Lisby 240

1951, a Gallup poll found that President Truman, guilty by longtime association with Kansas City's Pendergast machine, was at an "all-time low" in popularity. And Kefauver in this regard also was well-positioned to take advantage. Bartlett a few days earlier had reported that Washington columnist Lowell Mellett had pegged Kefauver, as a result of the crime hearings, "one of the chief Democratic contenders for the presidency if Mr. Truman steps aside. He is beginning to get telegrams suggesting that he run for President and all in all, the Kefauver bandwagon might well be said to be gathering speed" (*Times*). On March 25, Washington columnist and radio commentator Drew Pearson predicted that "a move would be launched soon to nominate Sen. Estes Kefauver for the presidency at the 1952 Democratic convention" (*Times*). A week later, "The chairman of the Senate Crime Investigating Committee was asked point-blank on an NBC television program ... if he has presidential ambitions. 'Nobody ever thought of me for President and certainly I never thought of it myself,' the Tennessee Democrat replied. 'I just want to be a United States senator if I can, and if I can't be that I want to go back to Tennessee and be a country squire'" (*Times*).²⁵

Nevertheless, on September 23, Bartlett's column bore the headline "Anti-Rackets Reputation Seems to Be Drawing Kefauver Nearer Place on National Ticket" (*Times*). Further pull was exerted November 6, when, in a sort of trial run by proxy, Halley parlayed his own "TV Crime Probe Quizmaster" fame into election as New York City Council president. Nine days afterward, as reported by the *News-Free Press*

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Mouzon Peters, Kefauver said, “‘I am not running for anything. But,’ he added quickly, ‘I’m not running away from anything.’”²⁶

CHAPTER 4: THE LAST HURRAH

On March 24, 1951, while pondering then-ongoing developments in the Senate crime probe, committee member Alexander Wiley said television may “become the most powerful single medium during the 1952 presidential and congressional elections.” Whether that came to pass is debatable, but then and for years thereafter, TV remained at or near the forefront of discussion concerning Estes Kefauver’s political prominence.¹ In 1952, after the obligatory buildup was validated by his announcement that he indeed sought the highest office in the land, the *News-Free Press* commented derisively, “Sen. Kefauver’s current popularity, on which his bid for the Democratic nomination for President is based, is the result of his success as a matinee idol television star in the extravagantly ballyhooed crime investigation.”² In a more objective context, the *Times* told of a non-hostile publication elsewhere calling Kefauver’s candidacy “TV-hatched.” Inter-party enmity was evidenced the following March, with Kefauver preparing to challenge President Truman in New Hampshire, site of the year’s first preference primary; as reported in the *Times* by the New York Times News Service’s John H. Fenton, former Senate majority leader Scott Lucas, who felt his 1950 electoral defeat resulted from revelations arising during the committee’s Chicago hearings, said that “voters next November would remember that Mr. Truman had turned the spotlight on graft and corruption in World War II, adding that he ‘did

¹ Chester 98;

² See “Not Candidate As Yet, Avers Sen. Kefauver” (Charles L. Bartlett, *Times*, January 12), “Kefauver’s Boom Now in 46 States” (*Times*, January 15), “Mrs. Estes Kefauver ‘Has a Feeling’ Senator to Enter Presidential Race” (*Times*, via AP, January 20) –

it without any fanfare, without any televised road shows.’”³ Despite such dismissal, Kefauver upset Truman, 19,800 to 15,927, on March 12. Mulling the Tennessean’s appeal to the people of that New England state, AP’s Arthur Edson wrote: “There’s a limit on how many hands anyone can shake. But television offers an interesting, mass-scale substitute” (*Times*). Mynders, on the other hand, labeled as fiction the notion that Kefauver “owes his appeal entirely to the fact that he is photogenic on television.”

Ray Tucker, in his syndicated column in the Richmond Times-Dispatch, blasts this latter hoax.

While it is true that Kefauver won many friends through television, it was the record of the Senate Crime Committee which propelled him into national favor, although he had already built up a solid reputation by ten years in the House of Representatives.

Mr. Tucker points out that there is no television station in New Hampshire, for instance. ‘Although 15,848 sets were shipped into the state last year, most of them are strung out along the southeastern border where they hook up with the Boston station. But FCC field office informed me that reception is extremely poor’ (*Times*).

On March 29, Truman, in a televised address, announced that he would not run for re-election. That same day, in the *Times*, Betty Gaskill wrote, “Not even television can keep up with (Kefauver’s) whirlwind campaign.” Just the same, on April 4 he was spotlighted by the CBS-TV program *Presidential Timber*. On April 17, at a New York state Democratic committee dinner, he gave what Bartlett described as a “fumbling delivery of a heavy-handed summation of the party platform,” aired “over a radio-television network” (*Times*). Later, having learned of network plans for televising Dwight D. Eisenhower’s June 4 announcement that he was a candidate for the Republican presidential nomination, Kefauver and Senator Robert Taft (R-Ohio) demanded equal time. As best can be determined, no such thing was granted officially, but

³ Fontenay 178-179; (Television’s limited availability – and influence, therefore – at that earlier stage evidently was beside the point.)

June 15 on NBC TV and radio, *American Forum of the Air* featured a debate between the two, while *Hats in the Ring* welcomed Kefauver as the sole guest (*Times*). Two weeks later, he appeared on CBS-TV's *Man of the Week* program (*Times*). Then, on July 5, he "braved hotel corridors jammed with Republicans to keep a television date. In his NBC TV appearance at the Conrad Hilton, beehive of GOP pre-convention activity, the Tennessee presidential candidate said he witnessed 'what may well be the death struggle of the Republican party'" (*Times*).

Over the span of his 1952 campaign, Kefauver won 14 contests altogether, from Massachusetts to Nebraska to California (where, in Los Angeles on May 30, he accepted a special Emmy Award his crime committee had been awarded February 19). His only two losses were in Florida (where, in Miami, he and the eventual winner, Georgia's Senator Richard Russell, staged a televised debate May 5) and the District of Columbia.⁴ Further analyzing the role Kefauver's TV-fashioned image played in his achievement, Tucker noted, via Mynders:

Nebraska has a population of 1,325,510, but only 125,171 television sets, mostly in the vicinity of Omaha. With a population of 3,434,575, Wisconsin has only 320,945 sets, and most are owned by people in or near Milwaukee. In (those states and also New Hampshire), Kefauver rolled up his largest votes in remote, rural areas, where there are few or no television facilities.

Mr. Tucker says Kefauver's 'showings are easily explainable on other grounds. He was a new, relatively young honest face. He was the "white knight" who exposed official corruption when others were denying that it existed or trying to cover it up. ... This picture of Kefauver as a refreshing and different kind of politician had been conveyed to the public by newspapers, magazines and his own speeches long before he went on the screen.' (*Times*)

Yet even if not fully shaped by the medium, Kefauver's fortunes at that stage once again seemed to reflect those of television. On April 13, as reported by the *New York Times* News Service's Alvin Shuster, "The Federal Communications Commission ... lifted its three-and-a-

⁴ Garay 485; Fontenay 198, 201, 204, 205

half-year-old ban on the construction of new television stations, clearing the way for the long-awaited expansion in the industry.” Duly concerned, theater owners, as reported by International News Service, began to look for new ideas. But in the meantime, they banked on fare such as *The Captive City*, “an exposition of crime syndicate activity in the country,” which premiered March 26, with a prologue delivered by Kefauver; and *Hoodlum Empire*, an April 15 release wherein “The fantastic underground organization of the rackets, as pinpointed by the Senate Crime Investigating Committee headed by Sen. Estes Kefauver, is revealed” (*Times*). By that point, though, more interest evidently was generated by the CBS-TV situation comedy *I Love Lucy* (which debuted October 15, 1951), the video version of NBC’s *Dragnet* (starting January 3, 1952) or even Truman’s televised White House tour (May 3, 1952; *Times*). Thus, while the film industry (along with Wiley) had protested the previous year when the FCC attempted to force release of “good movies to TV,” Republic Pictures on May 17, 1952, announced that it would show 56 of Gene Autry’s old productions on TV. Also bowing to the inevitable, Columbia Pictures on June 10 entered into the “first contract between a major movie studio and a national advertiser for the production of films for television.” The “Cyclops,” it seemed, was poised to obliterate every obstacle.

Of course, rampant success can and often does breed backlash. On February 25, as reported by AP: “Speaker Sam Rayburn stopped the televising and radio broadcast of an Un-American Activities Committee meeting today, and said there would be no more TV or radio reporting of committees as long as he is speaker and House rules are not changed” (*Times*). On June 3, a House subcommittee set out “to ascertain whether radio and TV programs contain immoral or otherwise offensive matter, or place improper emphasis upon crime and violence” (*Times*). And late the next month, despite proven vote-getting capabilities – as well as cutting-

edge strategies reflected in the *Times* headlines “Kefauver Timers Rely on Radio, TV: Will Try to Nominate Him When Biggest Group Sees and Hears Over Nation” and “Tennessee Delegation Is Instructed to Look Pretty for Television Fans” (both July 22) – Kefauver was rebuffed at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, losing on the third ballot to Illinois Gov. Adlai Stevenson, who at the event’s outset was not an announced candidate (*Times*). As one writer commented in 1978:

Conjecture has it that Senator Kefauver’s main opposition at the convention came from party bosses who themselves or whose friends had been politically injured or embarrassed by Crime Committee disclosures about links between organized crime and big-city political machines, mostly from the Democratic Party. If true, it is ironic that the same mechanism which had ensured Kefauver’s earlier victories would now ensure his defeat.⁵

Nine months after the events in question, Bartlett offered a slightly different slant:

(T)elevision showed that Sen. Estes Kefauver conducted his crime investigation with a deliberate, impassionate, and ruggedly judicious manner that won the approval of the nation and rocketed him to the forefront as a presidential contender, but the same television cameras showed the people that once in the race, Kefauver lost his impassivity and judiciousness and became just a guy who wanted the presidency very, very badly. The lessening in appeal that resulted from this view of the Tennessee senator was sufficient to enable the party bosses to cast him aside without an apology.

As for the conventions as a whole, on July 30, 1952, Stokes posited that “Some of (what was seen there) wasn’t a very wholesome sight,” and thus, “Television is bound to force changes” (*Times*). But certain other “politicians with foresight” – still taking their cue from the Kefauver committee – had become keenly aware that “television could be something more than a mute conveyor of convention hoopla.”⁶ Stevenson, in the eyes of many, did *not* fit this category; while seeking to take advantage of the networks’ and stations’ recently announced policy that

⁵ Garay 485

⁶ Castleman and Podrazik 62

“they would sell time to political candidates rather than donate it,” he “was effective on television only if he stood before an audience; at home ... he was ill at ease and hurried and basically uncommunicative.”⁷ GOP nominee Eisenhower, on the other hand, achieved true innovation with his adoption of the spot ad, “the most significant element of political television.”⁸ Airing in October, “Eisenhower Answers America” consisted of 31 segments in which he replied to questions posed by ordinary citizens (whose contributions actually were filmed after his). During the production process, Eisenhower’s visual image was controlled by removal of his glasses and donning of appropriate attire; enthusiasm-level coaching; and also lighting and makeup.⁹ Ultimately, Eisenhower’s electoral strength was such that his TV strategy – reported to have cost about \$1.5 million – likely was wholly unnecessary.¹⁰ But Bartlett, having foreseen developments of that nature, wrote on April 5:

“(T)he medium that threatens to blow the lid off all reason in the cost of political campaigns is television. There is no question as to TV’s effectiveness. ...

(S)ome way had best be found very quickly to limit campaign expenditures without loopholes. If some way is not found, the advertising agencies are going to elect the officeholders of the country and they will do it strictly in terms of the fees that are offered to them.

And when people start selecting their public leaders on the basis of the same advertising build-up that now guides the selection of their cigarettes, the republic had best look to its lifeboats (*Times*).

Meanwhile, it was Eisenhower’s running mate, Richard Nixon, who provided not only “the highlight of the campaign,” but also “one of the most important events in the history of political television.” Accused of holding an \$18,000 slush fund, and with his place on the ticket

⁷ Chester 78, 83

⁸ Stephen C. Wood, “Television’s First Political Spot Ad Campaign: Eisenhower Answers America,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 20 (spring 1990), 266.

⁹ Ibid, 271.

¹⁰ Donovan and Scherer, “Politics Transformed,” 23.

therefore imperiled, Nixon on September 23 televised an appeal soon to be known as the “Checkers speech.” Therein, he said no matter what, his family was keeping the eponymous “little cocker spaniel dog”; thereafter, overwhelmingly positive viewer prompted the Republican National Committee to announce that it was keeping him on the ballot.¹¹

Despite the snub to which his party had subjected him, Kefauver campaigned vigorously on Stevenson’s behalf. In the process, he appeared on the CBS-TV program *Pick the Winner*; to make the October 16 engagement, he took “a wild ride through Cleveland’s streets,” being “whisked from the airport to a downtown television studio in less than 15 minutes” (*News-Free Press*). And October 31, he was featured on NBC-TV’s *The Kate Smith Hour* (*Times*). Nevertheless, Eisenhower won decisively, and on January 15, 1953, the Democrats’ 20-year White House occupancy unofficially wrapped up as Truman delivered an “emotional farewell address, broadcast from the White House by coast-to-coast radio and TV networks (*Times*, via AP). Five days later, Eisenhower’s inauguration telecast likewise spanned the continent – although, in the public consciousness, this event was overshadowed somewhat by the previous night’s episode of *I Love Lucy*, in which “Little Ricky” was born.¹²

With McKellar having lost the August primary to erstwhile Representative Albert Gore – who in February 1951 had begun a weekly series of telecasts in Nashville – Kefauver at this juncture became Tennessee’s senior senator, and during a January 25, 1953, appearance on CBS-TV’s *Man of the Week*, he said he had no plans for the 1956 presidential race. Over the next few months, he busied himself with, for example, effecting the Dixon-Yates contract’s defeat, a highly publicized effort that dovetailed with his “continuing efforts against monopoly and in

¹¹ Castleman and Podrazik 73; Chester 84-86

¹² Castleman and Podrazik ix

favor of free competition,” while also further “defending TVA.” TV, however, was still in his thoughts when, on January 27, 1954 – a little more than a month after the FCC formally approved RCA’s color system as the industry standard – he issued a statement expressing his pleasure at the news that Chattanooga at last had been awarded its own such station. WDEF-TV’s initial sign-on was April 25; days earlier, as a member of the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency – which he termed “a natural follow-up” to the crime committee – Kefauver had returned to New York, where he took part in “hearings on effects of crime and horror comic books.” The April 22 session was televised locally, but its thunder was stolen the very same day by the start of proceedings centered on another senator, one who three years earlier had “watched with envy while journalists swarmed around crimebuster Kefauver like moths around a flame.”¹³ Wisconsin Republican Joseph McCarthy, “the nation’s most prominent and reckless crusader against the presence of Communists in government,” had “accused the army of inadequate internal security procedures”; the resultant hearings, in that spring of 1954 – along with the March 9 episode of CBS’s *See It Now*, in which newsman Edward R. Murrow denounced McCarthy – since have come to be seen as an enduring benchmark in the history of TV’s public service role.¹⁴ But at the time, they suffered by comparison with the crime committee probe. With principals “simply ... not as compelling as the gangsters who had appeared before Kefauver’s panel,” Army-McCarthy on April 23 garnered a 12-point Hooper rating in New York, versus a 32 for the 1951 inquest.¹⁵ NBC dropped out on April 24, although ABC and DuMont carried on, and by May 7, they reported that viewership had begun to

¹³ Shogan 60

¹⁴ Castleman and Podrazik 87-89, Baughman 228

¹⁵ Baughman 228; Times

increase. Just the same, whereas the “Kefauver show” regularly had been praised for its dramatic qualities, *Times* columnist R.F. Siemanowski on June 13, four days before Army-McCarthy’s conclusion, wrote: “On the whole the script for this production has been abysmal. ... With entertainment at such a premium and world conditions being what they are, the most popular television show in America is so funny it’s enough to make you cry.” But even if his crime hearings still were viewed as the gold standard, a chastened Kefauver by this point had adopted a more ambivalent stance toward televised hearings in general. Thus, on May 27, as reported by the *Times*, via AP, “he and 18 other senators, all Democrats except Sen. Morse (independent-Ore), jointly introduced a proposed new ‘Code of Fair Committee Procedures.’”

He said the “honor, the integrity and the probity” of the Senate are at stake because of widespread public interest in congressional investigations televised and broadcast by radio.

“Investigations have sometimes been sensational in nature,” he said. “They have given vast numbers of the American people a completely mistaken impression of the Congress and its work.”

Kefauver served as chairman of the former Senate Crime Investigating Committee, whose hearings were also widely televised. He said that experience showed the need for Senate rules covering investigations.

At subsequent proceedings that culminated in McCarthy’s censure, video in fact was barred, by unanimous vote. But as that year’s senatorial primaries neared, TV was wholeheartedly embraced by a new challenger, U.S. Representative Pat Sutton, who hoped that the medium which once elevated Kefauver might also bring him down. Between June 15 and July 13, in Knoxville, Memphis and Nashville, Sutton conducted around-the-clock radio-TV talkathons, a campaign technique that the *Times*’ H.L. Trewhitt wrote “could make him a much more formidable candidate for Kefauver’s job.” But in the end, a libel suit, filed by an Ohio publisher whom Sutton labeled a “known communist,” was all the upstart had to show for his

audacious experiment. Kefauver, whose own video campaigning was fairly minimal, won by a more than 2-1 margin. Days afterward, Bartlett wrote:

Having won a justified renomination to the U.S. Senate, Sen. Estes Kefauver must now face the important decision whether he will dedicate his vast energy and great ability in the next six years to a course of constructive legislating or to the avid pursuit of national acclaim that has characterized much of his past six years. ...

Such an effort would seem considerably more challenging to a real man than an unending chase after the public relations and television rainbow of popular favor.

Then, following Kefauver's similarly overwhelming win versus Nashville attorney Tom Wall in the November general election, Bartlett added:

(T)here are some lessons in the field of political analysis that can be learned from the campaign that ended last Tuesday.

The first of these is that television is unquestionably one of the most potent political weapons of the modern day. The medium was used extravagantly by many candidates, and in many cases the extravagance included little discrimination. ...

The eternal lesson of politics, and the lesson has been given added vigor by television, is that you can't fool very many of the people very much of the time.

Nevertheless, image control was the objective when Eisenhower, on January 19, 1955, held the presidency's first-ever televised weekly news conference. As reported in the *Times*, via AP, "Under the conditions laid down in advance, none of the newsreel or TV film, or the sound, could be used until the White House gave its approval." Meanwhile, more disfavor was shown Kefauver on February 7, when, thanks to "Democrats who for one reason or another did not want the Tennessean to do to the utilities what he did to the gangsters in 1950," he was denied chairmanship of the antimonopoly subcommittee of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Instead, as reported by Bartlett, Kefauver was tapped to take over the juvenile delinquency subcommittee, an assignment whose "uncolorful nature ... is being interpreted here as part of an effort by the Senate party leaders to make certain that Kefauver is not given another opportunity to dramatize himself and bolster his prospects for the Democratic presidential nomination." Evidently still

uneasy “despite the Tennessean’s promises to conduct ‘an unsensational, serious study,’” the Senate on March 18 “sharply curtailed” Kefauver’s plans to continue the probe. As reported by the *Times*:

The senate (*sic*), in a move interpreted as an attempt to keep Kefauver from getting further national recognition, voted to require the subcommittee to wind up its affairs and report by the end of July. Kefauver had planned to report in January. ...

Sen. Allen Ellender (D.-La.) ... said he didn’t know of any subject that hadn’t been covered already by the subcommittee, which has been operating since 1953 at a cost of over \$200,000. He declared: “all they can do is parade around the country and spend the taxpayers’ money and dramatize the matter with television and radio.”

“This committee will keep on doing the same work,” Ellender said at another point. “I presume there might be a little more television, a little more radio coming out of it. I presume the chairman and the other members will probably get quite a bit of advertising. It will just be money down the drain.”

Undeterred, Kefauver 16 days later announced that his subcommittee’s April 6-7 hearings in Washington would be televised. And indeed, in 1999, it was written that “For two days in April of 1955 Chairman Kefauver enjoyed the publicity television, radio, and print reporters gave him while covering the next round of hearings on television and delinquency.”¹⁶ But in fact, microfilm and database searches yield no evidence that any of the panel’s post-April 1954 live proceedings aired on TV.¹⁷ Abetted, perhaps, by the imminent demise of the DuMont network – which, along with ABC, had gained viewers but lost money by carrying the crime committee and Army-McCarthy hearings – such a scenario squares with syndicated columnist Doris Fleeson’s observation “that the juvenile delinquency investigation attracted little attention in Washington but ‘the hearings attracted packed crowds,’” as reported by Mynders in the July 31, 1955, *Times*. Among the issues attendees saw hashed out was, oddly enough, television, specifically crime programs. The panel also turned its attention to the film industry, which – bolstered by acclaimed

¹⁶ Hoerrner, <http://www.scripps.ohiou.edu/wjmcr/vol02/2-3a-B.htm>

¹⁷ Confidential File, Dec. 17 show

fare such as *From Here to Eternity*, *Peter Pan* and *On the Waterfront*, as well as 3-D, wide-screen processes and drive-in theaters' popularity – was enjoying “excellent recovery ... from the slump it found itself in following World War II and the growth of the television industry,” the *Times*' R.F. Siemanowski wrote. But amid this fresh wave of prosperity, even as *The Miami Story* (1954), *New York Confidential*, *New Orleans Uncensored*, *Chicago Syndicate*, *The Phenix City Story* and *Wiretapper* (all from 1955) bore witness to the crime probe's continued influence, movies faced charges of moral laxity. Desiring the edification of America's youth, Kefauver supplied the prologue to another motion picture, *Mad at the World*, released May 13, 1955. Slightly more than a month later, as reported by the *Times*, he asked that his investigators be given a copy of the press book for *Blackboard Jungle*, a film whose soundtrack included “Rock Around the Clock,” seminal tune of the musical genre – rock 'n' roll – that in turn was widely condemned as the very soundtrack of juvenile delinquency.¹⁸

And all the while, the “will he, or won't he?” question loomed large. In the June 26 *Times*, Bartlett wrote:

Sen. Estes Kefauver stands at the crossroads of a decision which is almost certain to cast its shadow over the rest of his public career.

On the one hand Kefauver is being urged by a host of individuals to go once more for the presidential nomination. On the other he is being told that he has no prospects in the coming year and should lay back to wait patiently for a later election.

The decision is important, because if Kefauver decides to run, he could touch off an improbable but possible chain of events that would land him in the White House. He could also become a Democratic cast-off whose dignity and stature have been all but eaten away by his ambition. ...

If he continues his present course – including the often hammy juvenile delinquency hearings and the far-flung speeches, he will be a candidate before he perhaps realizes it because the people and the politicians will come to believe he is a candidate. In these circumstances there will be no dignity in retreat.

Most of the people who are personally fond of Kefauver hope devoutly that he will not be a candidate, but few of them think he can avoid the temptation.

¹⁸ Bronson 1; “Rock-and-Roll Called ‘Disease’ of Rebellion” (*Times*)

Simultaneously, another coonskin-capped Tennessean, this one of a much older vintage, reigned as America's latest, greatest multimedia star. Between 1910 and 1950, Davy Crockett had been the subject of several altogether undistinguished motion pictures. But then, on December 15, 1954, ABC's *Disneyland* series aired "Davy Crockett, Indian Fighter," which had been filmed in and near Kefauver's home base, Chattanooga. Two subsequent installments, "Davy Crockett Goes to Congress" and "Davy Crockett at the Alamo," were shown in early 1955. And for whatever reason, a nationwide craze ensued, resulting in March and April's chart-topping radio hit titled "Davy Crockett, King of the Wild Frontier," followed in late May by Disney's distilled theatrical release of the same name.¹⁹ On April 27, Mynders wrote:

The current Life magazine devotes its leading eight pages to paragraphs and texts concerning the Davy Crockett manifestation which, insofar as the American boy is concerned, has completely put Hopalong Cassidy's nose out of joint. ... Coonskin caps are in short supply so great is the demand. Sale of Davy Crockett items is expected to reach \$100,000,000 in the stores by June. ...

"How long will the Davy Crockett (*sic*) craze last? Will kids still be wearing coonskin caps a year from now when the presidential campaign is underway and will that not help a certain Tennessean whose winning trademark in 1948 was the coonskin cap? Stranger things have happened.

At a televised news conference May 28, as reported by the Times, via AP, "Sen. Kefauver (D-Tenn.) said ... that he is not a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination and has no intention of entering the race at a later date." But six months and 19 days afterward, Kefauver did formally announce his candidacy. The next month, "Kefauver (D-Tenn.) said today he has reluctantly tossed aside his famous coonskin cap as a symbol of his presidential aspirations," as reported by the *Times*, via AP. "When he arrived here for a rally the senator refused photographers' requests that he pose in a coonskin cap. Asked about it later at a news

¹⁹ Whitburn, *The Billboard Books of Top 40 Hits*, 287

conference, the senator said his campaign lieutenants have advised him that ‘some people thinks it’s a little undignified.’” Later, Kefauver informed AP his 10-year-old son, David, actually had “told me the kids were all for Davy Crockett and were wearing coonskin caps but the calendar has passed me by,” the *Times* reported. “I was told no more this time. I guess it embarrassed the kids.” Too, as related by the *Times*, Harper’s Bazaar the previous July had branded Crockett a “juvenile delinquent who ran away from home.” Whatever his motivation, Kefauver’s eschewing of the coonskin “was historic ... in that it probably dealt a death blow to Davy’s commercializers,” the *Times*’ Martin Ochs wrote. “Crockett was on the way out anyway, if the sales figures all over the country indicated anything.”

Kefauver’s prospects, meanwhile, were less bleak. In the January 29 *Times*, Bartlett wrote:

The wave of brash and uncertain amateurism that was Sen. Estes Kefauver’s 1952 bid for the Democratic presidential nomination has given way this year to a compact movement which is emphasizing calculation over enthusiasm. ...

(I)f Kefauver is able to trip Stevenson soundly in the primary rounds, the party leaders are going to be hard put, in a televised convention, to throw the nomination to the New York governor (Averell Harriman) or to an even darker horse like Sen. Stuart Symington of Missouri.

After a trio of victories, including an upset of Stevenson in Minnesota on March 20, a United Press story in the *Times* bore the headline “Kefauver Brims With Confidence: He Tells of Rapid Gains in Strength, Thinks Chance of Nomination Good.” But during Florida’s primary – simultaneous with the chart-topping run of Memphis-based rock ‘n’ roll rage Elvis Presley’s breakthrough single, “Heartbreak Hotel” – the tide turned against Kefauver. On May 29, eight days after he and Stevenson met in Miami for a debate televised by ABC, the senator lost a narrow decision.²⁰ Then, on June 6, Kefauver took what an aide called “one hell of a beating” in

²⁰ Fontenay 258-259

the California contest. Still, Kefauver refused to quit, and symbolically propitious omens, if desperately sought, could be found in NBC's revival of *Man Against Crime* (which had dropped from the schedule in July 1954) and Disney's release of *Davy Crockett and the River Pirates* (culled from two more *Disneyland* episodes). But, alas, just as these productions failed to duplicate those franchises' earlier successes, Kefauver came to realize that his bounce-back chances were practically nil.²¹ And so, on July 31, he withdrew in favor of Stevenson.²²

However, notwithstanding his earlier claims to the contrary, Kefauver had begun warming to the idea of a vice presidential bid, and strong sentiment within certain segments of the party favored offering him that consolation prize.²³ But, as reported by Bartlett, Stevenson leaned toward choosing between Senators Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota and John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts (see Page xx). The latter, as reported in *The Chattanooga Times* by the New York Times News Service's Anthony Lewis, was "a photographic movie star" on August 13, the Democratic National Convention's opening night, when "The handsome young senator appeared in person and on the screen as narrator of a documentary history of the Democratic Party entitled 'The Pursuit of Happiness.'" At the film's conclusion, "Kennedy went to the platform to take a bow. ... The ovation was surprisingly loud and long."²⁴ Unsurprisingly, Kennedy – who also delivered the speech nominating eventual first-ballot winner Stevenson – thus emerged as a formidable contender when Stevenson left to convention delegates the selection of his running mate. His bandwagon growing ever more crowded, Kennedy eventually drew to within 38½

²¹ Brooks and Marsh 620; Maltin 326

²² Times; Fontenay 262, 265

²³ December, July 15, Aug. 2 Times, Fontenay 262

²⁴ Martin 100

votes of the nomination. But then the Tennessee delegation, upon Gore's last-minute withdrawal, switched its vote to Kefauver, setting off a stampede that, with stunning quickness, put the senior senator over the top. Kefauver, by his own reckoning, had been "in a lot of races, but I never have been in one like this." Of course, he previously *had* experienced – and, lest we forget, pioneered – practically made-for-TV political drama. But as it turned out, this was to be his last such moment in the spotlight. Addressing the convention immediately following his triumph, Kefauver said, "I sure am tired."²⁵ Those words encapsulated his feelings about the events of August 17, 1956, yet almost certainly they held at least some additional relevance vis-à-vis the years-long journey that lay behind him. Kennedy, meanwhile, "had lost, but he was not beaten." Following Kefauver to the podium and endorsing his candidacy, Kennedy used words that were "short, gallant, and touching. For the TV audience, it was a moment of magic they would not forget." As soon would become apparent, the torch had been passed.

By the time of the fall campaign, a fact already obvious was that television had gained undisputed status as America's medium of choice.²⁶ And Stevenson, in his rematch with Eisenhower, was no better equipped to face such a transition than he had been in 1952, for he still was "both unwilling and unable to master (slick techniques) sufficiently to make them work."²⁷ As for Kefauver's image, some fresh reminders could be found regarding his crime probe past. For instance, Mynders on August 21 wrote of how "the televised senator" once had "outraged President Truman" by "snooping into Missouri politics." And inspired by revelations arising therefrom, the erstwhile *Kansas City Story* surfaced in October as *The Boss*, "a story of

²⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQta7IgmG4>

²⁶ Chester 100

²⁷ Slaybaugh 16

political corruption in a big city.” Reviewing Kefauver’s performance in his new capacity, the *Times* noted that “his glasses fog up and his manner stiffens in the face of a national television network,” while the News-Free Press heckled a “bumbling televised performance” wherein “Kefauver was attacking the Eisenhower Administration and apparently meaning to name the President when he got tangled up and said that *Roosevelt* had promised everybody everything.” Still, the *Times* said, “he has been in almost every other circumstance a poised political performer who maintained his pleasant manner under the worst kind of pressure and responded intelligently to unforeseen incidents.” To cite one lighthearted example, from September 28, as reported by United Press:

Estes Kefauver, on the start of a barnstorming tour of Pennsylvania today, took note of a sign carried by some Erie Academy students.

The sign read, “Elvis for President.”

“Elvis Presley is a Tennessee boy from Memphis,” the Tennessee Senator told the students. He’s not running for president, and he’s for Adlai and me.

“The Republicans use an Elvis Presley record every leap year, though. On one side is ‘I Need You, I Want You, I Love You’ (*sic*). They play that during the campaign. After election day they play the other side – ‘See You Later, Alligator.’”

But not even an invoking of “the King” could offset the incumbent President’s continued popularity – a dynamic that was reinforced by Eisenhower’s “statesmanlike” – and televised – October 31 response to the Suez crisis.²⁸ Stevenson demanded equal time, and was given it the next day. But it mattered little. On Election Day, November 6, the Democrats carried only seven states. Tennessee was not among them.²⁹

Two days afterward, in the *News-Free Press*, Lyle C. Wilson’s UP story bore the headline “Nixon, Kefauver Emerge Top Heirs For Presidential Nomination in ’60.” But

²⁸

²⁹ Fontenay 283

unfavorable omens suggested that the latter's window of opportunity was narrowing, if not quite closed. On November 19, in yet another metaphorical turn, crime probe alumnus Rudolph Halley – whose “immobile expression, owl-like behind heavy horn-rimmed spectacles, became familiar to television audiences across the country” – died at 43. (Panel members Charles Tobey and Lester Hunt had died in 1952 and 1954, respectively.) Then, on January 8, 1957, in a concrete manifestation of “stop-Kefauver” sentiment within the Senate, the Foreign Relations Committee post Kefauver had coveted – as it was “especially desirable for a senator who has presidential ambitions” – instead went to Kennedy.³⁰ Likewise, with regard to electoral prospects, the *Times* on June 23 published a Gallup poll showing “Kefauver Yields Lead to Kennedy: Massachusetts Senator Is Ahead of Tennessean as Candidate in 1960.” Kefauver reclaimed the lead in surveys released August 11 and November 16, but as of February 7, 1958, Kennedy again was the more popular choice, and he would never again trail the Tennessean. Thus, Bartlett wrote in the March 21, 1959, *Times*, “in view of the fact that (Kefauver) must run for another Senate term and that the Tennessee primary will not come until after the (1960 Democratic) convention,” he “writes his friends across the nation that he has no plans for 1960 and almost everyone believes him.” Confirmation came September 14, when, as reported by the *Times*, via AP, Kefauver publicly announced, “I have no intention of taking any affirmative action to get my name on the ballot.”

With Kefauver no longer “the perennial presidential aspirant preoccupied with seeking national office at the expense of his Senate responsibilities, ... he became recognized as one of the Senate's most dedicated and hardworking members.” Hence, “the drama of the crime investigation and the excitement of the presidential campaigns (began) to fade at last in the

³⁰ Gorman 289-290

public mind.”³¹ Still, even as Kefauver watched from the sidelines, media-borne echoes of his flamboyant past were not difficult to discern. In a trivial vein, Charles Van Doren, during his celebrated – and ultimately scandalous – run as champion on the NBC-TV quiz show *Twenty-One* in 1957, was asked this question: “The 1940s marked the beginning of the fall from power of political bosses, and in those years, three of the most powerful of these bosses, all of whom had been mayor, began fading in Chicago, Jersey City and Memphis. Name these three men.” In the anti-corruption realm, the Senate Select Committee on Improper Activities in the Labor or Management Field, better known as the Rackets Committee, conducted televised hearings that pitted chief counsel Robert F. Kennedy, the then-senator’s younger brother, versus Teamsters President Jimmy Hoffa, also in 1957.³² (In light of those proceedings, the Kefauver probe occasionally was cited, and in February 1958, CBS-TV’s *Twentieth Century* presented “Crime and the Committee,” “a filmed reprise of the Senate televised crime investigation of 1951, the inquiry which brought Sen. Estes Kefauver [D-Tenn.] and others into national prominence,” as noted by the *Times*.) In cinemas – soon to report their highest attendance figures since 1948 – the 1958 Spencer Tracy vehicle *The Last Hurrah* centered on an aging politician’s realization “that the old-fashioned political campaign in a few years will be as extinct as the dodo. It’ll be all TV and radio.” And in that notion was found the most powerful testament to what Kefauver had wrought. Come 1960 – the year in which he successfully conducted what was to be his own final electoral campaign – presidential hopefuls were assessed by the *Times*, via AP, in an article headlined “Techniques in TV Appearances Can Help or Hurt Political Hopefuls.” Six months later, AP reported: “An unprecedented series of four face-to-face television debates between

³¹ Gorman 297

³² http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/rfk/peopleevents/p_hoffa.html

Vice President Richard M. Nixon and Sen. John F. Kennedy in their presidential race (has been) set up.” As permitted by Congress’ temporary suspension of Section 315, “This would be the first TV discussion in U.S. history by major rivals for the White House on the main issues.” The fall face-offs’ net effect is itself a matter of historical controversy. Popular legend holds that on radio – which, the Newspaper Enterprise Association’s Dick Kleiner wrote, “has been quietly staging a phenomenal comeback” – Nixon came off better.³³ But on television – which, the Census Bureau reported, was then in 88 percent of U.S. homes – “Kennedy had an élan ... that Nixon could not match.” Simply put, the younger man “had looked more presidential,” and so president he became.³⁴ And memorable moments during his brief Oval Office tenure – from his inauguration, to the Ole Miss integration battle, to the Cuban missile crisis, to his Berlin Wall address – were made even more so thanks to television coverage. His November 22, 1963, assassination, meanwhile, “cemented television’s role as a national information source and national unifier” – yet another development whose beginnings can be traced to Kefauver.³⁵

As for the Tennessee senator, in his final years he did not vanish from the airwaves entirely. He continued his weekly radio address, and no later than 1957, he undertook a regularly scheduled TV show, while also appearing from time to time on local and network public affairs programming. But these activities were merely incidental to Kefauver’s “working now through the unglamorous legislative process,” by which he “would make his greatest contributions to the public interest.”³⁶ On January 22, 1957, as reported by the Times, he “achieved the chairmanship

³³ Donovan and Scherer, *Unslient Revolution*, 45.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 45.

³⁵ Castleman and Podrazik 165

³⁶ Gorman 297

of the Senate Judiciary committee on antitrust and monopoly, a goal he has pursued through most of his Senate career.” In that capacity, over the next six years, he and his subcommittee “held hearings filling twenty-six volumes and issued comprehensive reports on administered prices in the steel, automobile, bread, and drug industries.”³⁷ Meanwhile, Russia’s launch of the first manmade satellite, Sputnik 1, on October 4, 1957, stoked fears of Soviet technological superiority, and thus provided more grist for the legislative mill, which in turn sowed the seeds for further revolutionary developments in communications. In February 1958, the Senate unanimously approved creation of the Advanced Research Projects Agency, which was given charge of developing Space Age weapons. Yet along the way, as computer science became a greater focus, ARPA in 1969 begat the ARPANET, which in 1982 begat the Internet, which in 1991 was joined to the “user-friendly interface” known as the World Wide Web. Of course, even by the early 1960s, few were able to envision such wonders. Not so another, more immediate Sputnik legacy. In an AP article published by the Times on July 2, 1961, Ralph Dighton wrote:

You may wake up some day to find the United States has lost another race in space – the race to be first in stringing ‘talking’ satellites across the sky. ...

The pressing need for an American communications satellite has been recognized. ...

A tough question must be answered before any government agency can give a go-ahead to any faction of the industry.

1. Should the communications satellites be owned by the government, like the postal system?

2. If not, should one firm, or team of firms, be given a monopoly?

3. Or should the field be thrown open to all comers, in the traditional American manner of free competition?”

The question was still far from resolved when, on July 10, 1962, as reported by the Times, via AP:

³⁷ Gorman 303

Government and private American enterprise teamed ... to put a historic communications satellite into orbit. From outer space it inaugurated an era of ocean-spanning international television.

At the same time that the Telstar satellite, a sort of switchboard in the sky, was relaying vivid television pictures into the homes of Americans, images also were picked up in France and England, some of them remarkably clear.

The reception abroad came many days ahead of the scheduled beginning of international television transmission via Telstar.

The first televised picture from outer space showed the American flag rippling strongly in a breeze, to the tune of the Star-Spangled Banner.

Two days afterward, the Times commented: "Telstar is a triumph of government-industry cooperation and partnership Some opponents fear a 'give-away' in private development. But the saving of taxpayers' billions aside, we say there is the wisdom of a free system in the partnership approach."

Kennedy agreed, proposing that Congress create a profit-making communications satellite corporation. Kefauver was opposed, as he saw in such proposition that most detestable of entities, a monopoly – this one "in a vast new and unexplored and cosmic field," to quote Senator Ernest Gruening (D-Alaska).³⁸ And so, as reported by the *Times*' Nina A. Steers, Kefauver and Gore on August 8, 1963, "rallied themselves for one more round of unheeded warnings over the communications satellite corporation."

The Kefauver amendment to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration authorization bill which came up for debate in the Senate Thursday, provided the two senators their opportunity.

Kefauver proposed that the authorization bill be amended to require that the corporation reimburse NASA for expenditures related to research on the communications satellite.

The Senate defeated his amendment by a vote of 60-11 Friday.

³⁸ Fontenay 398-399

Kefauver, despite his vested interest, was not present for the vote. For on that previous night, while his proposal was being argued, he suffered a “mild heart attack” and entered the U.S. Naval Hospital in Bethesda, Md., AP reported. His administrative assistant, Charles Caldwell, “said the senator’s condition is not considered serious,” but hours later he was diagnosed with an aortic aneurysm. At 3:33 a.m. August 10, 1963, with his wife and daughters en route from Colorado, and surgery pending, “Kefauver’s overworked heart gave way. He died, peacefully, fifteen days past his sixtieth birthday.”³⁹

For the next few days, newspapers in Chattanooga and elsewhere published retrospectives and tributes wherein Kefauver’s “colorful and widely known political career” was seen to defy easy summation. But permutations of one particular angle typically were found not far below the lead paragraph. *The News-Free Press*: “Using a nationwide reputation won by his televised investigations of crime that showed him off to advantage questioning known racketeers, he became a serious presidential contender in 1952 and again in 1956, only to be defeated at the Democratic convention both times.” *The Chattanooga Times*: “In the early 1950s he headed the Senate Crime Investigating Committee. Its televised hearings thrilled millions with a startling insight into the underworld through the nation’s then new medium of communication.” The New York Times News Service’s Russell Baker: “His TV investigations of the mobs, which had publicized certain ugly facts about the relationship of dirty money and urban politics, had won him that lasting hatred of the big machine politicians.” *The Atlanta Constitution*’s Ralph McGill: “He went after the syndicate of crime. His investigations coincided with the burgeoning talents and abilities of television. The nation looked on as the criminals, petty and major, came and sat under questioning.”

³⁹ Fontenay 402-403

Seemingly obvious, then, was this assertion from the *New York Journal-American*: “The nation will not soon forget his fight against organized crime and the televised hearings of his crime investigations committee.”

CONCLUSION

In January 1964, as reported by *The Chattanooga Times*, via AP, Nancy Kefauver donated the contents of her late husband's Washington and Chattanooga offices – papers, books, mementos, even his “large wooden desk” – to his alma mater, the University of Tennessee, where they were to be put on permanent display. Fifty years later, as reported by Jack Neely of Knoxville's *Metro Pulse* weekly, “his daughter, Lindsay Kefauver, got word that UT was not going to include the Kefauver exhibit in its future plans.” The collection, it turns out, “has been off limits to the public for several years, since cracks emerged in the modernist wing that contained it, betraying dangerous structural problems. After some study, UT decided to remove the troublesome addition, which raised questions of what to do with the Kefauver office.”

Unsurprisingly, then, the senator's most highly publicized achievement likewise has been consigned mostly to history's storage closet. As far back as 1978, one writer observed: “Although their place of importance in television's history would seem quite obvious, the Crime Committee hearings have been generally excluded from the literature of broadcast history (save for a few perfunctory acknowledgments that they did occur).”⁴⁰ In August 2014, a ProQuest News and Newspapers database search indicated that since 1997, only eight articles in major metropolitan dailies have made even tangential mention of “Kefauver,” “crime” and “television.” A separate search indicated that even Chattanooga's merged *Times Free Press* in that span has incorporated those angles in only five articles. *Sic transit gloria mundi*.

Present-day forgetfulness, though, does nothing to diminish the farsighted coverage *The Chattanooga Times* once gave Kefauver's career in general, and the crime probe in particular. As distinct from the *News-Free Press* – which, even when reporting on the climactic New York

⁴⁰ Garay 469

hearings, seemed not to grasp their significance – the *Times*, led by Bartlett, made clear the remarkable nature of what was transpiring. Certainly, the presence of Kefauver *and* gangsters had been sufficient to spark attention, and the addition of a Big Apple backdrop added still more volatility, but only when semi-national TV was tossed into that mix did the story blow up. And Kefauver thus was propelled to the heights of national prominence, only to find that a “boom” born merely of popular favor would not put him over the top.

Since then, other politicians can be said to have “done TV better.” John F. Kennedy was the ultimate embodiment of “the charm-school theory of high politics.” Richard Nixon stood at the vanguard of “how public-relations people and admen sold presidents like soap and cigarettes.” Former movie star Ronald Reagan was “a first-class communicator.” Bill Clinton “fused the elements of political celebrity with continuous campaigning.”⁴¹ And all these men, unlike Kefuaver, attained the presidency. Televised hearings, too, have achieved greater results, a la Watergate, and are at the very least much more commonplace, thanks to C-SPAN. But all those personalities and events owe a debt to – and are linear descendants of – Kefauver and his committee, for they did it *first*.

In the final analysis, then, the proverbial “first rough draft of history” is seen to have required very little revision.

⁴¹ Gould Gould 192, 204, 213

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