

## **David Hackett, 84, Youth Advocate and Kennedy Administration Official, Dies.**

David Hackett, a national leader in youth advocacy and a key player in the political lives of both John F. Kennedy and Robert F. Kennedy, died Saturday in Rockville, Maryland from complications of vascular disease. He was 84 and lived in Bethesda, MD since 1962.

From 1959-1968, Hackett played central roles in the presidential campaigns of both John and Robert Kennedy – and in Robert Kennedy’s 1964 U.S. Senate campaign in New York. In the Kennedy administration, he served as Executive Director of the President’s Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime from 1961-1964. He also led The National Service Corps in 1962, envisioned as a domestic equivalent of the Peace Corps, which became the Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) program.

After leaving government service, Hackett served as Executive Director of the RFK Memorial 1974-1979, a nonprofit organization focused largely on anti-poverty and human rights issues and established in the wake of Robert Kennedy’s death.

In 1979, Hackett founded the Youth Policy Institute, a Washington-based news and research non-profit addressing youth and education policy. YPI published a highly regarded national newsletter and trained several generations of public policy interns.

Hackett came to Washington in 1959 when he was hired to join the presidential campaign of John Kennedy on the recommendation of Robert Kennedy. Hackett had befriended the younger Kennedy at Milton Academy in the 1940s – and their close friendship lasted until Robert Kennedy's assassination in June 1968.

During the 1960 presidential run, Hackett managed the pre-computer-age delegate-counting operation known as the “boiler room,” which profiled and tracked the political preferences of delegates to the democratic national convention. The operation proved a critical component of the successful – and razor-thin – victory over Richard Nixon.

Hackett later reprised this role for the 1968 presidential run of Robert Kennedy.

Following John Kennedy's election, Hackett was appointed Executive Director of the President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime. The community action program that emerged was a groundbreaking effort to engage poor people themselves in the decision-making process related to federal government programs meant to help them. It was later incorporated as Title II of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 as part of President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty.

Hackett's athletic prowess was legendary. His physical skills and spontaneous personality helped inspire the award-winning novel *A Separate Peace*. Written by John Knowles, the best-selling book has been a staple of high school English classes for more than 40 years.

While at Exeter for the 1942 summer session, and in the shadow of World War II, Hackett met Knowles. The author later described using Hackett as the model for the central character of Phineas, who excelled in physical activities and was an inventive, spontaneous and sympathetic social force.

"He possessed an extra vigor, a heightened confidence in himself, a serene capacity for affection which saved him," Knowles wrote of Phineas.

David Low Hackett was born in Dedham MA in 1926. He was the son of William Henry Young Hackett, a Boston banker, and Louisa Haydock, a Quaker from Philadelphia.

Hackett was a celebrated New England schoolboy athlete, starring in ice hockey, football and baseball at Milton Academy. There he met and befriended Robert Kennedy.

After prep school and a stint in the 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division of the U.S. Army as a paratrooper during World War II, Hackett used the G.I. Bill to attend McGill University in Montreal, Canada, an unusual choice for a Boston-area hockey star. At McGill, he once scored three goals in 48 seconds.

Hackett went on to be selected for two U.S. Olympic hockey teams, in 1948 and 1952. In 1952, a broken ankle kept him from playing on the silver-medal team. And he later played for the Baltimore Clippers of the Eastern Amateur Hockey League.

While living in Baltimore, he met his future wife, Judith Williams, born in Maidenhead, England, while she was on tour with the London Festival Ballet. A determined Hackett pursued his bride-to-be to England and persuaded her to move to the U.S., where she appeared in the original 1956 Broadway cast of *My Fair Lady*.

In 1957, Hackett briefly returned to Montreal to found a magazine, *The Montrealer*, modeled after *The New Yorker*.

He is survived by his wife of 54 years, Judith, of Bethesda, MD; by five children Louisa Hackett of Montclair, NJ; Christopher Hackett of Bethesda, MD; Kimberly Hackett of Cambridge, MA; Robert Hackett of Princeton, NJ; and Victoria Hackett of Beverly, MA; and 11 grand children.