



JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY—Shown here is John F. Kennedy, taking time out to sign his autograph for a fan. In November, 1959, Mr. Kennedy, then a senator, visited Bend.



A BIT OLDER—President Kennedy, pictured here on a later Oregon visit, appears a bit older than when he visited Powell Butte in 1959.



HAPPY CANDIDATE—Pictured here at the Powell Butte Lord's Acre dinner in November, 1959, is a happy candidate, Jack Kennedy. With him, at right, is the Rev. D. L. Penhollow.

A day of infamy: eyewitness tells the chronology of tragic events

EDITOR'S NOTE: Merri Smith, UPI White House reporter since 1941, was on the scene in Dallas Friday when President Kennedy was assassinated. Smith was in the motorcade not far from Kennedy when the shooting took place. He followed the President's car to the hospital and the death. He was there for the swearing-in of President Johnson in an Air Force jet and came on back to Washington aboard the aircraft bearing the new President and the body of the slain Kennedy. He was the only news agency reporter on the aircraft.

By MERRIMAN SMITH
UPI White House Reporter
WASHINGTON (UPI)—It was a balmy, sunny noon as we motored through downtown Dallas behind President Kennedy. The procession cleared the center of the business district and turned into a handsome highway that wound through what appeared to be a park.

I was riding in the so-called White House press "pool" car, a telephone company vehicle equipped with a mobile radio-telephone. I was in the front seat between a driver from the telephone company and Malcolm Kilduff, acting White House press secretary for the President's Texas tour. Three other pool reporters were wedged into the back seat.

Suddenly we heard three loud, almost painfully loud cracks. The first sounded as if it might have been a large firecracker. But the second and third blasts were unmistakable. Gunfire.

The President's car, possibly as much as 150 or 200 yards ahead, seemed to falter briefly. We saw a flurry of activity in the Secret Service follow-up car behind the Chief Executive's bubble-top limousine.

Fourth In Line
Next in line was the car bearing Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson. Behind that, another follow-up car bearing agents assigned to the vice-president's protection. We were behind that car.

Our car stood still for probably only a few seconds, but it seemed like a lifetime. One sees history explode before one's eyes and for even the most trained observer, there is a limit to what one can comprehend.

I looked ahead at the President's car but could not see him or his companion, Gov. John B. Connally of Texas. Both men had been riding on the right side of the bubble-top limousine from Washington. I thought I saw a flash of pink which would have been Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy.

We screamed at our driver, "get going, get going." We careened around the Johnson car and its escort and set out down the highway, barely able to keep in sight of the President's car and the accompanying Secret Service follow-up car.

Then Saw Hospital
They vanished around a curve. When we cleared the same curve we could see where we were heading — Parkland Hospital, a large brick structure to the left of the arterial highway. We skidded around a sharp left turn and spilled out of the pool car as it entered the hospital driveway.

I ran to the side of the bubble-top.

The President was face down on the back seat. Mrs. Kennedy made a cradle of her arms around the President's head and bent over him as if she were whispering to him.

Gov. Connally was on his back on the floor of the car, his head and shoulders resting in the arms of his wife, Nellie, who kept shaking her head and shaking with dry sobs. Blood oozed from the front of the President's suit. I could not see the President's wound. But I could see blood spattered around the interior of the rear seat and a dark stain spreading down the right side of the President's dark gray suit.

Radioed First Report
From the telephone car, I had radioed the Dallas bureau of UPI that three shots had been fired at the Kennedy motorcade. Seeing the bloody scene in the rear of the car at the hospital entrance, I knew I had to get to a telephone immediately.

Clint Hill, the Secret Service agent in charge of the detail assigned to Mrs. Kennedy, was leaning over into the rear of the car.

"How badly was he hit, Clint?" I asked.

"He's dead," Hill replied curtly.

I have no further clear memory of the scene in the driveway. I recall a babble of anxious voices, tense voices — "Where in hell are the stretchers... get a doctor out here... he's on the way... come on easy there." And from somewhere, nervous sobbing.

bulletin saying the President had been seriously, perhaps fatally, injured by an assassin's bullets while driving through the streets of Dallas.

Litters bearing the President and the governor rolled by me as I dictated, but my back was to the hallway and I didn't see them until they were at the entrance of the emergency room about 75 or 100 feet away.

I knew they had passed, however, from the horrified expression that suddenly spread over the face of the man behind the wicket.

Outside the door of the emergency room, I watched a swift and confused panorama sweep before me.

Kilduff of the White House press staff raced up and down the hall. Police captains barked at each other, "clear this area." Two priests hurried in behind a Secret Service agent, their narrow purple stoles rolled up tightly in their hands. A police lieutenant ran down the hall with a large carton of blood for the transfusions. A doctor came in and said he was responding to a call for "all neurosurgeons."

Given Last Sacrament
The priests came out and said the President had received the Last Sacrament of the Roman Catholic Church. They said he was still alive, but not conscious.

Kilduff and Wayne Hawks of the White House staff ran by me, shouting that Kilduff would make a statement shortly in the so-called nurses room a floor above and at the far end of the hospital.

I threw down the phone and sped after them. We reached the door of the conference room and there were loud cries of "quiet!" Fighting to keep his emotions under control, Kilduff said "President John Fitzgerald Kennedy died at approximately one o'clock."

I raced into a nearby office. The telephone switchboard at the hospital was hopelessly jammed. I spotted Virginia Payette, wife of UPI's Southwestern Division manager and a veteran reporter in her own right. I told her to try getting through on pay telephones on the floor above.

Frustrated by the inability to get through the hospital switchboard, I appealed to a nurse. She led me through a maze of corridors and back stairways to another floor and a lone pay booth. I got the Dallas office. Virginia had gotten through before me.

Selected for Pool
I ran back through the hospital to the conference room where Jiggs Fauver of the White House transportation staff grabbed me and said Kilduff wanted a pool of three men immediately to fly back to Washington on Air Force One, the presidential aircraft.

Charles Roberts of Newsweek magazine, Sid Davis of Westinghouse broadcasting and I implored a police officer to take us to the airport in his squad car.

As we piled out of the car about 200 yards from the presidential aircraft, Kilduff spotted us and motioned for us to hurry. We trotted to him and he said the plane could take two pool men to Washington; that Johnson was about to take the oath of office aboard the plane and would take off immediately thereafter.

I saw a bank of telephone booths beside the runway and asked if I had time to advise my news service. He said, "but for God's sake, hurry."

Then began another telephone flurry. The Dallas office rang busy. I tried calling Washington. All circuits were busy. Then I called the New York bureau of UPI and told them about the impending installation of a new president aboard the airplane.

Aboard Air Force One on which I had made so many trips as a press association reporter covering President Kennedy, all of the shades of the larger main cabin were drawn and the interior was hot and dimly lighted.

Kilduff propelled us to the President's suite.

Room Was Crowded
I wedged inside the door and began counting. There were 27 people in this compartment.

Johnson stood in the center with his wife, Lady Bird. U.S. District Judge Sarah T. Hughes, 67, a kindly faced woman stood with a small black Bible in her hands, waiting to give the oath.

Mrs. Kennedy, who was composing herself in a small bedroom in the rear of the plane, appeared alone, dressed in the same pink wool suit she had worn in the morning when she appeared so happy shaking hands with airport crowds at the side of her husband.

She was white-faced but dry-eyed. Friendly hands stretched toward her as she stumbled slightly. Johnson took both of her hands in his and motioned her to his left side. Lady Bird stood on his right, a fixed half-smile showing the tension.

Johnson nodded to Judge Hughes, an old friend of his family and a Kennedy appointee.

"Hold up your right hand and repeat after me," the woman jurist said to Johnson. Outside a jet could be heard droning into a landing.

when Johnson in a deep, firm voice, repeated after the judge, "...and so help me God."

Johnson turned first to his wife, hugged her about the shoulders and kissed her on the cheek. Then he turned to Kennedy's widow, put his left arm around her and kissed her cheek.

As others in the group—Some Texas Democratic House members, members of the Johnson and Kennedy staffs—moved toward the new President, he seemed to back away from any expression of felicitation.

The two-minute ceremony concluded at 3:38 p.m., EST and seconds later, the President said firmly, "Now, let's get airborne."

Col. James Swindal, pilot of the plane, a big gleaming silver and blue fan-jet, cut on the starboard engines immediately. Several persons, including Sid Davis of Westinghouse, left the plane at that time. The White House had room for only two pool reporters on the return flight and these posts were filled by Roberts and me, although at the moment we could find no empty seats.

Took High Altitude
At 3:47 p.m., EST, the wheels of Air Force One cleared the runway. Swindal roared the big ship up to an unusually high cruising altitude of 41,000 feet where at 625 miles an hour, ground speed, the jet hurtled toward Andrews Air Force Base outside Washington.

When the President's plane reached operating altitude, Mrs. Kennedy left her bedchamber and walked to the rear compartment of the plane. This was the so-called family living room—a private area where she and Kennedy, family and friends had spent many happy airborne hours chatting and dining together.

Kennedy's casket had been placed in this compartment, carried aboard by a group of Secret Service agents.

Mrs. Kennedy went into the rear lounge and took a chair beside the coffin. There she remained throughout the flight. Her vigil was shared at times by four staff members close to the slain Chief Executive—David Powers, his buddy and personal assistant; Kenneth P. O'Donnell, appointments secretary and key political adviser; Lawrence O'Brien, chief Kennedy liaison man with Congress and Brig. Gen. Godfrey McHugh, Kennedy's Air Force aide.

Makes First Statement
As the flight progressed, Johnson came up to the table where Roberts and I were trying to record the history we had just witnessed.

"I'm going to make a short statement in a few minutes and give you copies of it," he said. "Then when I get on the ground I'll do it over again."

It was the first public utterance of the new Chief Executive.

The Bulletin, Saturday, November 23, 1963 5
Compared with Abraham Lincoln

Expressions of sympathy pour in from capitals of the world

By United Press International
The assassination of President Kennedy shocked the world.

Heads of state and ordinary citizens grieved alike. Expressions of sympathy poured into Washington from capitals of the free world.

Moscow Radio played organ music in an unprecedented tribute to the dead President. A

brief and moving: "This is a sad time for all people. We have suffered a loss that cannot be weighed. For me it is a deep personal tragedy. I know the world shares the sorrow that Mrs. Kennedy and her family bear. I will do my best. That is all I can do. I ask for your help—and God's."

When the plane was about 45 minutes from Washington, the new President got on a special radio-telephone and placed a call to Mrs. Rose Kennedy, the late President's mother.

"I wish to God there was something I could do," he told her, "I just wanted you to know that."

Then Mrs. Johnson wanted to talk to the elder Mrs. Kennedy.

Gives Love And Prayers
"We feel like the heart has been cut out of us," Mrs. Johnson said. She broke down for a moment and began to sob.

Recovering in a few seconds, she added, "our love and our prayers are with you."

Thirty minutes out of Washington, Johnson put in a call for Nellie Connally, wife of the seriously wounded Texas governor.

The new President said to the governor's wife: "We are praying for you, darling, and I know that everything is going to be all right, isn't it? Give him a hug and a kiss for me."

It was dark when Air Force One began to skim over the lights of the Washington area. The plane touched down at 5:59 p.m. EST.

Roberts and I stood under a wing and watched the casket being lowered from the rear of the plane and borne by a complement of armed forces body bearers into a waiting hearse. We watched Mrs. Kennedy and the President's brother, Atty. Gen. Robert F. Kennedy, climb into the hearse beside the coffin.

Roberts and I were given seats on another 'copter bound for the White House lawn. In the compartment next to ours in one of the large chairs beside a window sat Theodore C. Sorensen, one of Kennedy's closest associates with the title of special counsel to the President. He had not gone to Texas with his chief but had come to the air base for his return.

brief biography on the government-controlled Soviet Radio called him "an outstanding American statesman."

British newspapers mourned in sorrowful editorials.

"A tragedy for the world," said the Guardian.

"The Stalins of the world mostly die in their beds," said the London Daily Herald. "It is the Lincolns and the Kennedys who are shot down..."

The London Daily Mirror said: "The man who stood for all the precious values of the West is dead — the victim, like his great predecessor Abraham Lincoln, of the crazy bullet of a fanatic."

Soviet Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev was reported rushing back to Moscow from the south of Russia after learning of Kennedy's assassination. Moscow Radio blamed the death on "extreme right-wing elements."

British Prime Minister Sir Alec Douglas-Home went on a nationwide television network to tell his people that the "frightful deed" that ended Kennedy's life should dedicate the world anew to his ideals.

The news was flashed to Asia at a time when most of its people slept. They awoke stunned by the news.

Kennedy was especially popular in Japan where the people felt he was the first American president to give their country the attention it deserved.

In Ireland, the ancestral home of the Kennedys, a great wave of sorrow welled across the land. "Oh, my God, not Jack Kennedy," sobbed one woman. President Eamon De Valera, 81, sent his sympathy to Mrs. Kennedy.

Pope Paul VI received the news with "profound grief" and retired to his private chapel to pray.

Many state operated broadcasting systems in Western Europe curtailed regular programs to broadcast funeral music and television stations showed film clips of the President's life.

French President Charles De Gaulle, the target of two major assassination attempts who has been cool toward the Kennedy administration, said "President Kennedy died as a soldier, under fire, for his duty and in the service of his country."

The United Nations suspended its sessions in New York and U. S. Ambassador Adlai E. Stevenson, numb with grief, said, "The tragedy of this day is beyond instant comprehension... may God help us."

It was a terrible blow for West Berlin Mayor Willy Brandt to whom Kennedy had pledged support to keep West Berlin free.

D. Kohler at midnight to express his "shock and greatest sympathy to the American people."

There was shock and consternation in Latin America.

President Romulo Betancourt slumped back in his chair in stunned silence, a grim expression on his face, when he heard the news. Interior Minister Manuel Mantilla said Kennedy was a "great and loyal friend of Latin America and Venezuela."

President Francisco Orlich of Costa Rica ordered five days of national mourning. The Brazilian senate adjourned.

Peruvian President Fernando Belaunde Terry expressed "profound consternation." He halted a cabinet meeting to rise in a minute of silent tribute.

Chilean President Jorge Alessandri ordered national mourning. President Adolfo Lopez Mateos of Mexico sent a message of condolence to Mrs. Kennedy. Argentine President Arturo U. Illia suspended trading on the stock exchange.

In the United States Harry S. Truman, on whom an assassination attempt was made in 1950, said at his home in Independence, Mo., the President's death was a "tragedy."

"I am shocked beyond words at the tragedy that has happened to our country and to President Kennedy's family," he said. "The President's death is a great personal loss to the country and to me. He was an able president, one the people loved and trusted."

Dwight D. Eisenhower, the slain President's predecessor in office, said in New York the assassination was a "despicable act."

"I share the sense of shock and dismay that all Americans feel at the despicable act that resulted in the death of our nation's President," he said as he stood red-eyed before newsmen.

"Mrs. Eisenhower and I also join with all other citizens in expressing our personal grief and prayerful concern to Mrs. Kennedy and all other members of the family."

Herbert Hoover, who resides in the same New York hotel where Eisenhower was staying, said: "I am shocked and grieved to learn of President Kennedy's assassination. He loved America and has given his life for his country."

"I join our bereaved nation in heartfelt sympathy to Mrs. Kennedy and their two children," the 89-year old Hoover said.

Sen. Barry Goldwater, R-Ariz., who had often opposed Kennedy politically, called the President's death "shocking and dreadful" and asked how "a thing like this could happen."