

Eyewitness Describes Tragic Events

EDITOR'S NOTE: Merriam Smith, UPI White House reporter who now is covering his fifth president, was riding several cars behind President Kennedy in a Dallas, Tex., motorcade Friday when an assassin struck. Smith followed the President's car to the hospital. He was there for the announcement of death and he witnessed President Johnson's oath-taking as the only news service reporter aboard the plane back to Washington. This is his eyewitness story of history.

By MERRIMAN SMITH
UPI White House Reporter

WASHINGTON (UPI) — It was a balmy, sunny noon as we followed President Kennedy's car through downtown Dallas. Then, suddenly, we heard three almost painfully loud cracks.

The first sounded as if it might have been a large firecracker. But the second and third were unmistakable. Gunfire.

I was riding in the White House press "pool" car, equipped with a radio-telephone. I was in the front seat between a telephone company driver and Malcolm Kilduff, acting White House press secretary. Three other pool reporters were wedged in the back seat.

As we heard the shots the President's car, possibly as much as 150 or 200 yards ahead, seemed to falter. There was a flurry of activity in the Secret Service car behind the President's open limousine.

Car Stops
Our car stopped for probably only a few seconds, but it seemed like a lifetime. Even for a trained observer there is a limit to what one can comprehend.

I could not see the President or Gov. John Connally of Texas in their car. I thought I saw a flash of pink which would have been Mrs. Kennedy.

Everybody in our car began shouting at the driver to pull up closer to the President's car. But at this moment, we saw the limousine and a motorcycle escort roar away at high speed. We careened around Vice President Lyndon Johnson's car and its escort and set out down the highway, barely able to keep in sight of the President's car.

We cleared a curve and saw Parkland Hospital, a large brick structure to the left of the highway. We spilled out of the pool car as it entered the hospital driveway.

I ran to the side of the limousine.

Les Face Down
The President lay 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.

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 is he? Where are the stretchers... get a doctor out here... he's on the way... Come on, easy there." And from somewhere, nervous sobbing.

Litters bearing the President

and the governor then rolled by as my back was turned.

I knew they had passed, however, from the horrified expressions.

After calling my office I ran back through the hospital to the conference room where a White House aide grabbed me and said Kilduff wanted a pool of three newsmen immediately to fly back to Washington.

I ran down the stairs and into the driveway, only to discover Kilduff had just pulled out in our telephone car.

Hop Police Car

Charles Roberts of Newsweek Magazine, Sid Davis of Westinghouse Broadcasting and I got 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 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 call in the news. "For God's sake, hurry," he said.

All circuits were busy to the Dallas office and even Washington. I finally called the New York bureau of UPI and told them about the impending inauguration 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 lit. The plane sat on the ground throughout the ceremony.

Kilduff propelled us to the President's suite two-thirds of the way back in the plane. The room normally could accommodate eight to ten people seated.

Right Is Jammed
I wedged inside the door and counted 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.

Johnson waited for Mrs. Kennedy, who was composing herself in a small bedroom in the rear of the plane. She soon 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 priest said to Johnson.

Outside, a jet could be heard droning into a landing.

Takes Oath
Judge Hughes held out the Bible and Johnson covered it with his large left hand. His right arm went slowly into the air and the jurist began to intone the Constitutional oath.

"I do solemnly swear I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States."

The brief ceremony ended 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.

The two-minute ceremony concluded at 3:33 p.m., EST and a second later, the President said firmly, "Now, let's get airborne."

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.

Walks To Casket

When the President's plane reached operating altitude, Mrs. Kennedy left her bedchamber and walked to the rear compartment of the plane. The casket had been placed in this compartment.

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 staff members close to the slain Chief Executive.

Johnson walked back into the main compartment.
"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."

When the plane was about 45 minutes from Washington, the new President got on a 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."

"We feel like the heart has been cut out of us," Mrs. Johnson told the elder Mrs. Kennedy. Then 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."

Ride On Copter

After we landed in Washington, Roberts and I were given seats on a helicopter bound for the White House. In the compartment next to ours, in one of the large chairs beside a window, sat Theodore C. Sorenson, one of Kennedy's closest associates with the title of special counsel to the Presi-

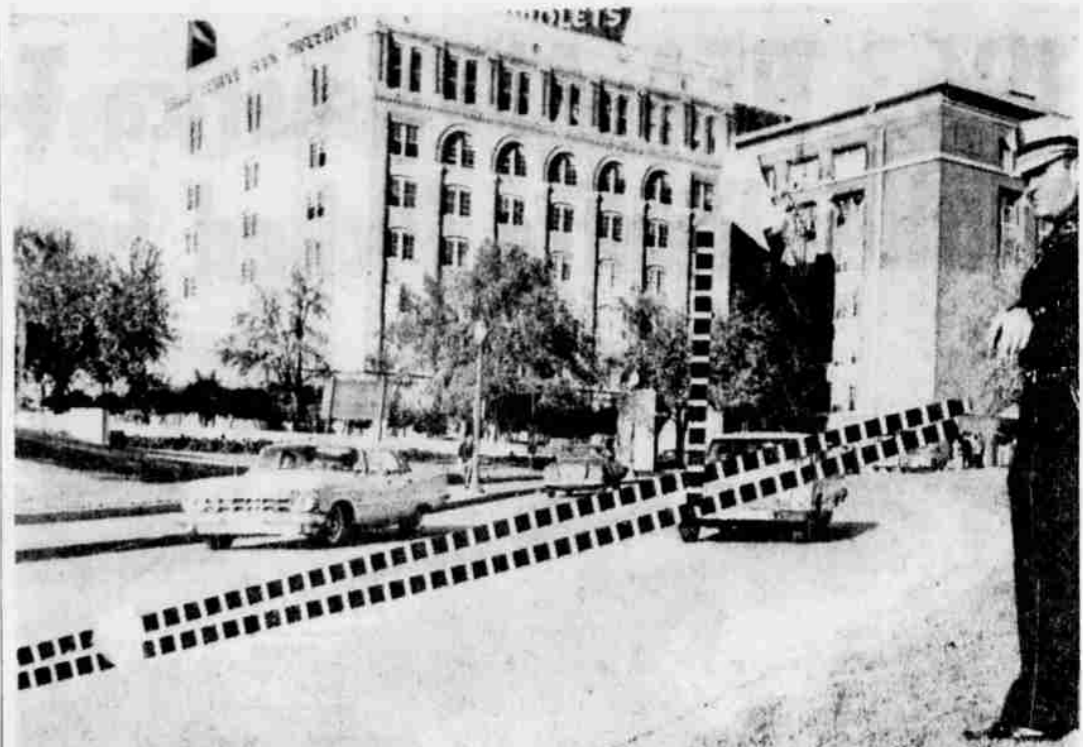
dent. He had not gone to Texas with his chief but had come to the air base for the somber return of the dead President.

Sorenson sat wilted in the large chair, crying softly. The dignity of his deep grief seemed to sum up all of the tragedy and sadness of the previous six hours.

Wasco Police Cite KF Man

Donald Sharp, 60, was arrested at his Klamath Falls home Thursday on a Wasco County warrant charging him with obtaining money under false pretenses.

Sharp was arrested at 1342 Lookout Avenue by a city policeman after the warrant notice was teletyped here from The Dalles. Sharp was expected to be returned to The Dalles today. His bail was set at \$1,000. No other details of the case were known here.



WHERE IT HAPPENED — The double dotted line marks the path of President Kennedy's car. The single dotted line marks the approximate path of the bullet from the window (large arrow) to its impact with President Kennedy. A Dallas policeman points to a spot (small arrow) where a bullet is believed to be imbedded in the ground. This is Elm Street as it goes under the triple underpass.

KF Resident Shows 1865 Paper Describing Lincoln's Death

A New York City newspaper, dated May 6, 1865, describing the assassination and funeral of Abraham Lincoln and including drawings of that tragic event 90 years ago, was brought to the Herald and News Saturday morning.

The newspaper is the property of Harry Stone, 2135 Darrow, and was displayed by his son, Al Stone, 133 Hillside, an instructor at OTI.

Al Stone told the Herald and News that the newspaper originally belonged to his great uncle, Eliga Stone, a cavalry soldier during the Civil War. He brought the newspaper west with him in the early 1920s and it became the property of Harry Stone when his uncle died in 1924.

Harry Stone, now retired in Klamath Falls, glued the newspaper on a piece of oil cloth to preserve it. He pasted it with the drawings showing after he had copied the stories on a separate sheet of paper.

The newspaper, "Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper," contained a giant drawing of President Lincoln's funeral procession on April 19, 1865. Sixteen columns wide, the sketch, done in great detail, showed the horse-drawn carriages, led by a military escort, moving past the presidential mansion.

The drawing, in a day when photographs were rare, was made on the spot by the paper's artist, William T. Crane. Elegantly dressed men and women could be seen weeping side-by-side with Negroes as they viewed the funeral march.

Another picture showed Lincoln's coffin as the president's body lay in state in the east room of the White House. There was another sketch showing the assassination scene. It depicted Lincoln bent over in his box at the Ford Theatre and showed the killer leaping to the stage. Another drawing showed the hat dropped by the assassin, plus his spur, which had caught in the flag as he leaped to the stage.

Stories appearing in that 1865 paper included an account of the assassination, a description of the president's body lying in state, the coffin, the funeral procession, the funeral car and related stories.

Following is a reprint of the story of the assassination as it appeared in that May 6, 1865, newspaper:

Assassination Of The Late President Lincoln

In our last number we gave a full account of the assassination and death of a ruler, more loved and lamented than a y chief magistrate has ever been before. We shall, therefore, content ourselves with brief recapitulation of those awful events. As we have previously stated, President Lincoln went somewhat reluctantly to the theater, but not wishing to disappoint the audience, which expected him and General Grant, he sacrificed his personal convenience to his kindness of heart.

About 9 o'clock he entered the private box, accompanied by Mrs. Lincoln, Miss Harris and Major Rathbone. While quietly enjoying the comedy at the "American Cousin," a person who, there is no reasonable doubt, was John Wilkes Booth, the actor, entered the box from the door, and placing a pistol close to the President's head fired. He then sprang out of the box between the two flags, first stabbing Major Rathbone, and alighting on the stage brandished a dagger, crying, "Sis temper tyrannus!"

"The South is avenged!" he cried, spurs on his heel striking the flag, and he fell upon the knee, but instantaneously re-

gaining his feet, he rushed behind the scenes, escaped at the stage door, and mounting his horse rode off as hard as he could gallop. Mr. Stewart, a well-known lawyer of Washington, who happened to be one of the audience, sprang over the orchestra and pursued the assassin; but he had got the start of him, and Mr. Stewart had the provoking spectacle of seeing the murderer disappear in the darkness.

So sudden and unexpected was this horrible deed that it was only when Mrs. Lincoln screamed that the audience was aware that anything was wrong. They concluded that the pistol report had been fired on the stage, and was part of the play. When the nature of the deed was known, although the

full extent of the calamity was not suspected, the excitement, rage and sorrow was intense. With great presence of mind, Miss Laura Keane, who was near the side scene, when the assassin sprang from the box, came forward, and begged the audience to be calm.

The surgeons who had gone to Mr. Lincoln's box saw at a glance that the wound was mortal, and indeed they were, it is said, surprised that death had not been instantaneous. About 20 minutes after the fatal shot had been fired the body was removed from Ford's Theatre to Mr. Petersen's house, 433 Tenth Street, nearly opposite. Here in a back room, whose dimensions are 10 by 15, the gentlest and most exalted

of mortal rulers was taken to die. Few men, even when nurtured in a quiet farm life, ever possessed Abraham Lincoln's single-heartedness, integrity and almost feminine tenderness—and when the circumstances of his hard life are taken into consideration, it is almost a marvel that the poor and friendless boy, the Mississippi boatman, the laborer, the rail-splitter, the soldier, the lawyer, the politician and finally the statesman, should pass through this perilous ordeal, and come out the gentle-hearted and noble-souled man he has proved himself.

Here during the eventful night, Mrs. Lincoln was brought in to see her unconscious husband—we need not describe a scene so painful. The last was particularly affecting, for she saw in the gray light of dawn, by expression of the eyes and the sinking lips, that death had set its seal upon the dear companion of nearly 25 years! She was removed in

almost an insensible state to the front room on the same floor, where she had been watching throughout the dreary night, surrounded by Miss Harris and a few ladies, her most intimate friends.

At 22 minutes past 7 President Lincoln breathed his last. He had been perfectly unconscious since receiving the fatal shot, and it is a matter of surprise that he survived so long. The body was soon after removed to the White House, previous to which a post-mortem examination was held, and the ball extracted from the front lobe of the brain. The bullet had entered the back of the head on the left side, about two inches above the ear, and had gone in a slanting direction to the back of the right eye,

where it had lodged, stopping before it had reached the eye. From the wound some of the brains had issued, mingled with blood, and this had stained the rocking chair in which President Lincoln was sitting, when he received the fatal wound.

During the night this wound bled, staining the pillow on which the unconscious dying man rested. After the post-mortem was completed a few locks of hair were cut from his revered head, and the body was taken to the White House, where, after being embalmed, it laid in state.

Immediately upon the President's death the bells of the city churches were tolled, and this was the first intimation that their Chief Magistrate was dead.

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NATION WEEPS — An unidentified woman standing outside Parkland Hospital in Dallas, Tex., cries upon learning of President Kennedy's death. —UPI Telephoto

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