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*Assassination of President
 John Fitzgerald Kennedy
 11/22/63 - Dallas, Texas*

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62-109060

John Fitzgerald Kennedy

Lawyer

UPI A87N

ADVANCE FOR AM'S SUNDAY NOV. 21.
 (EDITOR'S NOTE: TWO YEARS AGO, RIFLE SHOTS KILLED PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY AND LEFT GOV. JOHN CONNALLY OF TEXAS WOUNDED AND SCARRED FOR LIFE. EVERY TIME CONNALLY BATHES OR EATS, HE IS VIVIDLY AND PAINFULLY REMINDED OF THE TRAGEDY, WHICH HE RELUCTANTLY RELIVES IN THIS INTERVIEW.)

BY WILLIAM HAMILTON

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UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL
 AUSTIN, TEX., NOV. 20 (UPI)--JOHN CONNALLY'S HANDSOME FACE CLOUDED AND HIS EYES REDDENED IN RECOLLECTION: "I FELT A HARD IMPACT, AS IF SOMEONE HAD HIT ME IN THE BACK--A VERY HARD BLOW WITH A CLOSED FIST, IT FELT LIKE."
 SO DOES THE GOVERNOR OF TEXAS REMEMBER THE THREE SHOTS BY LEE HARVEY OSWALD THAT TORE LIFE FROM JOHN F. KENNEDY AND GRAVELY WOUNDED CONNALLY AT APPROXIMATELY 12:30 P.M. CST (1:30 P.M. EST) ON A DALLAS STREET, FRIDAY, NOV. 22, 1963. IT IS A MEMORY BROUGHT BACK TO HIM CONSTANTLY BY PAIN, SUDDEN BURSTS OF SOUND AND THE SIGHT OF HIS SCARS.
 AT MEALS, HE WILL REACH FOR A BOWL WITH HIS RIGHT HAND AND SWITCH TO HIS LEFT WITH A TWINGE OF PAIN IN HIS WOUNDED RIGHT WRIST.
 BATHING AND SWIMMING, HE SEES THE MARKS ON HIS BODY. ONLY WITH RELUCTANCE WOULD CONNALLY CONSENT TO TALK ABOUT IT AS THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF THE ASSASSINATION APPROACHED. HE SPOKE IN AN INTERVIEW BECAUSE HE FELT HE OWED IT TO HISTORY.
 "I THINK ABOUT IT ALMOST CONSTANTLY, ALMOST EVERY DAY," HE SAID WITH OBVIOUS MENTAL ANGUISH. "EVERY TIME I SIT DOWN TO A MEAL I'M REMINDED OF IT. I CAN'T PROPERLY USE A FORK WITH MY RIGHT HAND."
 "I TRY NOT TO CONSCIOUSLY THINK ABOUT IT, BUT EVERY TIME I TAKE A SHOWER OR GO SWIMMING, I SEE THE SCARS..."
 A BULLET FROM OSWALD'S 6.5 MM MANNLICHER-CARCANO RIFLE PIERCED CONNALLY'S CHEST, COLLAPSING A LUNG, WENT THROUGH HIS LEFT THIGH AND BROKE HIS RIGHT WRIST.
 CONNALLY STAYED IN THE HOSPITAL AT DALLAS FOR SIX WEEKS. HE WORE A CAST ON HIS WRIST FOR MONTHS. NOW 48, HIS HAIR IS MUCH GRAYER THAN IT WAS THAT DAY IN NOVEMBER, BUT HIS HEALTH IS GOOD.
 CONNALLY'S MEMORIES UP TO THE TIME HE HEARD THE CRACK OF A THIRD SHOT FROM OSWALD'S RIFLES IN THE TEXAS SCHOOLBOOK DEPOSITORY ARE STILL VIVID: 11/21/65

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"THE CROWD WAS IMMENSE AND SPONTANEOUS," HE SAID. "I THOUGHT THE PRESIDENT WAS IN HIGH GOOD HUMOR. ABOUT THE TIME WE ARRIVED IN DALLAS THE SUN BROKE CLEAR AND IT LOOKED LIKE IT WOULD BE A PERFECT DAY."

CONNALLY AND HIS WIFE NELLIE RODE IN THE JUMP SEATS OF A WHITE HOUSE LIMOUSINE, TOP DOWN, FROM LOVE (AIR) FIELD TO DOWNTOWN DALLAS. PRESIDENT AND MRS. KENNEDY WERE IN THE BACK SEAT, FACING THEM, AS THE MOTORCADE ROLLED ALONG.

"WE WERE LOOKING FORWARD TO A GREAT LUNCHEON THERE IN DALLAS AND TO A BIG DINNER IN AUSTIN THAT NIGHT," CONNALLY RECALLED. "AND THEN WE TURNED TO GO DOWN STEMMONS FREEWAY."

"THE FIRST INKLING I HAD THAT ANYTHING WAS AMISS WAS WHEN I HEARD A SOUND THAT I THOUGHT WAS A SHOT. I TRIED TO TURN AROUND IN FRONT OF THE PRESIDENT. I FELT A HARD IMPACT."

"...THE FIRST TIME I KNEW I HAD BEEN HIT WAS WHEN I SAW BLOOD ALL OVER MY CLOTHING."

"I SAID TO NELLIE, 'MY GOD! THEY'RE GOING TO KILL US BOTH!' SHE KEPT SAYING, 'BE STILL, BE STILL. YOU'RE GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT.'"

"I REMEMBER HEARING THE THIRD SHOT AND KNEW THAT SOMEONE HAD BEEN HIT A FATAL BLOW. THERE WAS BLOOD ALL OVER ME AND THE CAR."

CONNALLY LOST CONSCIOUSNESS AT THAT MOMENT. AT PARKLAND MEMORIAL HOSPITAL, WHILE ONE SURGICAL TEAM VAINLY WORKED ON PRESIDENT KENNEDY, ANOTHER TEAM OPERATED ON CONNALLY.

SUDDEN NOISES STILL BOTHER CONNALLY. WHEN CHANCELLOR LUDWIG ERHARD OF WEST GERMANY VISITED PRESIDENT JOHNSON IN TEXAS DURING THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS OF 1963, THE 21-GUN SALUTE FOR ERHARD UNNERVED BOTH THE GOVERNOR AND MRS. CONNALLY.

CONNALLY STILL HUNTS OCCASIONALLY ON HIS RANCH NEAR FLORESVILLE, TEX. HE SAID THE SOUND OF GUNFIRE DOES NOT DISTURB HIM AND HIS WIFE NOW.

"IT'S THE UNANTICIPATED NOISES THAT UNNERVE US," HE SAID. "I DON'T PERSONALLY LIKE TO RELIVE IT AT ALL. IT SHOULD BE RELEGATED NOW TO THE PAGES OF HISTORY. I GRANTED THIS INTERVIEW BECAUSE I FELT I SHOULD, NOT BECAUSE I WANTED TO."

THE EVENTS OF NOV. 22, 1963, TAUGHT CONNALLY TWO THINGS. HE WAS REASSURED BY THE SMOOTH TRANSITION OF THE REINS OF GOVERNMENT FROM ONE PRESIDENT TO ANOTHER, EVEN THOUGH "WE SUFFERED A GREAT SHOCK, A GREAT TRAGEDY."

IT TAUGHT CONNALLY A LASTING LESSON ABOUT THE DURABILITY OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT. 11/21/65

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"ALSO, IT HAD PROVEN TO ME IN A RATHER FORCEFUL MANNER THAT TIME IS FLEETING," HE SAID. "YOU NEVER KNOW AT WHAT MOMENT YOU WILL BE CALLED."

HE WON A SECOND TWO-YEAR TERM OF OFFICE LAST YEAR IN A LANDSLIDE AND IS A SOLID FAVORITE FOR A THIRD TERM IN 1966.

HE FEELS MUCH CLOSER TO HIS WIFE AND THEIR CHILDREN--JOHN, 19; SHARON, 15, AND MARK, 12.

"I TRY TO SPEND MUCH MORE TIME WITH THEM THAN I HAVE IN THE PAST," CONNALLY SAID.

CONNALLY CORRESPONDED WITH MRS. KENNEDY FOR A WHILE.

"BUT WE HAVE NOT HEARD FROM HER RECENTLY," HE SAID. "OUR PATHS DO NOT CROSS."

HE HAS RETURNED TO DALLAS A NUMBER OF TIMES, BUT HE HAS NOT VISITED THE PLACE NEAR THE TRIPLE UNDERPASS WHERE HE AND THE PRESIDENT WERE SHOT.

"I HAVE BEEN BY IT, BUT I'VE NEVER STOPPED AND VISITED IT," HE SAID. "I DON'T ANTICIPATE THAT I WILL."

"MAYBE I SHALL. I HAD GREAT ADMIRATION FOR PRESIDENT KENNEDY, BUT I NEED NOTHING TO REMIND ME OF MY RELATIONS WITH HIM...AND I DON'T NEED ANOTHER REMINDER OF THE TRAGIC OCCURRENCE."

CONNALLY SAID THE RESENTMENT THAT SWELLED AGAINST DALLAS AS A "CITY OF HATE" IS NOW ABOUT GONE. CONNALLY, A DEMOCRAT, HAS STRONG POLITICAL AND PERSONAL TIES IN DALLAS AND HE QUICKLY DEFENDS IT.

"THE ANGER THAT WELLED UP INSIDE PEOPLE, THAT CAUSED THEM TO STRIKE OUT IN EVERY DIRECTION, HAS ALMOST, IF NOT ENTIRELY, DIMINISHED," CONNALLY SAID.

FOR A WHILE, HE RECEIVED CRANK LETTERS BLAMING HIM FOR THE PRESIDENT'S DEATH, BUT EVENTUALLY THEY STOPPED COMING.

CONNALLY BELIEVES THE WARREN COMMISSION PROPERLY INVESTIGATED ALL DETAILS OF THE ASSASSINATION. HE BELIEVES, AS THE COMMISSION CONCLUDED, THAT LEE HARVEY OSWALD WAS THE MAN BEHIND THE RIFLE AND ACTED INDEPENDENTLY.

THERE IS ONE PHASE OF THE AWFUL EVENTS CONNALLY WILL NOT TALK ABOUT. THAT IS WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO JACK RUBY, NOW UNDER DEATH SENTENCE FOR MURDERING OSWALD.

DIST. ATTY. HENRY WADE IN DALLAS HAS SAID HE WOULD RECOMMEND COMMUTATION OF THE DEATH SENTENCE TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT.

EVENTUALLY, A DECISION WHETHER RUBY GOES TO THE ELECTRIC CHAIR OR TO PRISON MAY BE CONNALLY'S.

IN THE MEANTIME, CONNALLY REFUSES "TO PREJUDGE WHAT ACTIONS I MIGHT TAKE."

ADVANCE FOR AM'S SUNDAY, NOV. 21

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