

# At the Hospital; Mrs. Kennedy Watched Doctors at Grim Task

By JIMMY BRESLIN

DALLAS, Nov. 22 — The call bothered Dr. Malcolm Perry. "Dr. Tom Shires, STAT," the girl's voice said over the page in the doctors' cafeteria at Parkland Memorial hospital. The "STAT" meant emergency. Nobody ever called Dr. Tom Shires, the hospital's chief resident in surgery, for an emergency. And Dr. Shires, Dr. Perry's superior, was out of town for the day. Dr. Malcolm Perry looked at the salmon croquettes on the plate in front of him. Then he put down his fork and went over to a telephone.

"This is Dr. Perry taking Dr. Shires's place," he said.

"President Kennedy has been shot, STAT." The operator said. "They are bringing him into the emergency room right now."

Dr. Perry hung up and walked quickly out of the cafeteria and down a flight of stairs and pushed through a brown door and a nurse pointed to Emergency Room No. 1 and Dr. Perry walked into it. The room is narrow and has gray tiled walls and a cream-colored ceiling. In the middle of it, on an aluminum hospital cart, the President of the United States had been placed on his back and he was dying while a huge lamp glared in his face.

## Threw Jacket to Floor

John F. Kennedy already had been stripped of his jacket, shirt and T-shirt, and a staff doctor was starting to place a tube called an endotracheal down the throat. Oxygen would be forced down the endotracheal. Breathing was the first thing to work on. The President was not breathing.

Dr. Perry unbuttoned his dark blue glen plaid jacket and threw it onto the floor. He held out his hands while the nurse helped him put on gloves.

The President, Dr. Perry thought. He's bigger than I thought he was.

He noticed the tall, dark-haired girl in the pink dress that had her husband's blood all over the front of the skirt. She was standing out of the way, over against the gray tile wall. Her face was tearless and it was set, and it was to stay that way because Jacqueline Kennedy, with a ter-

rible discipline, was not going to take her eyes from her husband's face.

Then Dr. Perry stepped up to the aluminum hospital cart and he took charge of the hopeless job of trying to keep the thirty-fifth President of the United States from death. And now, the enormity came over him.

Here is the most important man in the world, Dr. Perry thought.

## No Apparent Heartbeat

The chest was not moving. And there was no apparent heartbeat inside it. The wound in the throat was small and neat. Blood was running out of it. It was running out too fast. The occipito parietal, which is a part of the back of the head, had a huge flap. The damage a bullet does as it comes out of a person's body is unbelievable. Blood from the head wound covered the floor.

There was a mediastinal wound in connection with the bullet hole in the chest. Dr. Perry called for a scalpel. He was going to start a tracheotomy, which is opening the throat and inserting a tube into the windpipe. The incision had to be made below the bullet wound.

"Get me Drs. Clark, McClelland, and Baxter right away," Dr. Perry said.

Then he started the tracheotomy. There was no anesthesia. John Kennedy could feel nothing now. The wound in the back of the head told Dr. Perry that the President never knew a thing about it when he was shot, either.

As Dr. Perry worked on the throat, he said, quietly, "Will somebody put a right chest tube in, please."

The tube was to be inserted so that it could pull out the blood and air packed in the chest and prevent the lung from collapsing.

## Attention to His Task

These things that he was doing took only minutes, and other doctors and nurses were in the room and talking and moving, but Dr. Perry does not remember them. He saw only the throat and chest, shining under the huge lamp, and when he would look up or move his eyes between motions, he would see this pink dress and the disciplined face standing over against the gray tile wall.

Just as he finished the trach-

otomy, Dr. Perry looked up and saw Dr. Kemp Clark, chief neurosurgeon in residency at Parkland, come through the door. Dr. Clark was looking at the President of the United States. Then he looked at Dr. Malcolm Perry and the look told Dr. Perry something he already knew. There was no way to save the patient.

"Would you like to leave, Ma'am?" Dr. Kemp Clark said to Jacqueline Kennedy. "We can make you more comfortable outside."

Just the lips moved. "No," Jacqueline Kennedy said.

Now Dr. Perry's long fingers ran over the chest under him and he tried to get a heartbeat, and even the suggestion of breathing, and there was nothing. There was only the still body, pale white in the light, and it kept bleeding, and now Dr. Perry started to call for things and move his hands quickly because it all was running out.

## Began to Massage

He began to massage the chest. He had to do something to stimulate the heart. There was not time to open the chest and take the heart in his hands, so he had to massage on the surface. The aluminum cart was high. It was too high. Dr. Perry was up on his toes so he could have leverage.

"Will somebody please get me a stool?" he asked.

One was placed under him. He sat on it, and for 10 minutes he massaged the chest. Over in one corner of the room, Dr. Clark kept watching an electrocardiogram for some sign that the massaging was creating action in the President's heart. There was none. Dr. Clark turned his head from the electrocardiogram.

"It's too late, Mac," he said to Dr. Perry.

The long fingers stopped massaging and they were lifted from the white chest. Dr. Perry got off the stool and stepped back.

Dr. M. T. Jenkins, who had been working the oxygen flow, reached down from the head of the aluminum cart. He took the edges of a white sheet in his hands. He pulled the sheet up over the face of John Fitzgerald Kennedy. The clock on the wall said it was 1 p.m. The date was Nov. 22, 1963.

The Rev. Oscar Huber, a small, 70-year-old priest, walked quickly into the room. Dr. Perry turned to leave.

"I'm sorry. You have my deepest sympathies," Father Huber said.

"Thank you," Jacqueline Kennedy said.

Father Huber pulled the white sheet down so that he could anoint the forehead of John Fitzgerald Kennedy. Jacqueline Kennedy was standing beside the priest, her head bowed, her hands clasped across the front of the pink dress that was stained with blood that came from her husband's head. Now the priest held up his right hand and he began the chant that Roman Catholic priests have said over their dead for centuries.

The prayer said, "If you are living, I absolve you from your sins. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, Amen."

#### The Anointment

The priest reached into his pocket and took out a vial of holy oil. He put the oil on his right thumb and made a cross on President Kennedy's forehead. Then he blessed the body again and started to pray quietly.

"Eternal rest, grant unto him, O Lord," Father Huber said.

"And let perpetual light shine upon him," Jacqueline Kennedy answered. She did not cry.

Father Huber prayed like this for 15 minutes. And for 15 minutes, Jacqueline Kennedy kept praying aloud with him. Her voice did not waver. She did not cry. From the moment a bullet hit her husband in the head and he went down onto his face in the back of the car on the street in Dallas, there was something about this woman that makes everybody who saw her keep talking about her. She was in

shock. But somewhere, even under that shock someplace, she seemed to know that there was a way to act when the President of the United States has been assassinated. She was going to act that way, and the fact that the President was her husband only made it more important that she stand and look at him and not cry.

When he was finished praying, Father Huber turned and took her hand. "I am shocked," he said.

#### 'Thank You'

"Thank you for taking care of the President," Jacqueline Kennedy said.

"I am convinced that his soul had not left his body," Father Huber said.

"This was a valid last sacrament."

"Thank you," she said.

Then he left.

When the day was through, Dr. Perry drove to his home. When he walked into the house, his daughter, Jolene, 6 years old, ran up to him. She had papers from school in her hand.

"Look what I did today in school, Daddy," she said.

She made her father sit down in a chair and look at her school work. The papers were covered with block letters and numbers. Dr. Perry looked at them. He thought they were good. He said so, and his daughter chattered happily. Malcolm, his 3-year-old son, ran into the room after him. And Dr. Perry started to reach for him.

Then it hit him. He dropped the papers with the block numbers and letters and he did not notice his son.

"I'm tired," he said to his wife, Jennine.

"I've never been tired like this in my life."

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