

A Widow's Tormenting Thought: Perhaps She Could Have Saved Him

WASHINGTON (AP) —

Here is the text of testimony by Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy June 5 before the Warren Commission investigating the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

The chairman (Chief Justice Earl Warren): The commission will be in order.

Mrs. Kennedy, the commission would just like to have you say in your own words, in your own way, what happened at the time of the assassination of the President. Mr. Rankin (General Counsel J. Lee Rankin) will ask you a few questions, just from the time you left the airport until the time you started for the hospital. And we want it to be brief. We want it to be your own words and want you to say anything that you feel is appropriate to that occasion.

Would you be sworn, please, Mrs. Kennedy?

Do you solemnly swear that the testimony you give before the commission will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Mrs. Kennedy. I do.

The chairman. Would you be seated.

Mr. Rankin. State your name for the record.

Mrs. Kennedy. Jacqueline Kennedy.

President's Widow

Mr. Rankin. And you are the widow of the former President Kennedy?

Mrs. Kennedy. That is right.

Mr. Rankin. You live in Washington?

Mrs. Kennedy. Yes.

Mr. Rankin. Can you go back to the time that you came to Love Field on Nov. 22 and describe what happened there after you landed in the plane?

Mrs. Kennedy. We got off the plane. The then Vice President and Mrs. Johnson were there. They gave us flowers. And then the car was waiting, but there was a big crowd there, all yelling, with banners and everything. And we went to shake hands with them. It was a very hot day. And you went all along a long line. I tried to be close to my husband and lots of times you get pushed away, you know, people leaning over and pulling your hand. They were very friendly.

And, finally, I don't know how we got back to the car. I think Congressman Thomas

somehow was helping me. There was lots of confusion.

Mr. Rankin. Then you did get into the car. And you sat on the left side of the car, did you, and your husband on your right?

Mrs. Kennedy. Yes.
Mr. Rankin. And was Mrs. Connally—

Mrs. Kennedy. In front of me.

Mr. Rankin. And Gov. Connally to your right in the jump seat?

Mrs. Kennedy. Yes.
Mr. Rankin. And Mrs. Connally was in the jump seat?

Mrs. Kennedy. Yes.
Mr. Rankin. And then did you start off on the parade route?

Mrs. Kennedy. Yes.
Mr. Rankin. And were there many people along the route that you waved to?

Mrs. Kennedy. Yes. It was rather scattered going in.

Once there was a crowd of people with a sign saying something like "President Kennedy, please get out and shake our hands, our neighbors said you wouldn't."

Mr. Rankin. Did you?

Mrs. Kennedy. And she stopped and got out. That was, you know, like a little suburb and there were not many crowds. But then the crowds got bigger as you went in.

Mr. Rankin. As you got into the main street of Dallas were there very large crowds on all the streets?

Mrs. Kennedy. Yes.

Mr. Rankin. And you waved to them and proceeded down the street with the motorcade?

Mrs. Kennedy Waved

Mrs. Kennedy. Yes. And in the motorcade, you know, I usually would be waving mostly to the left side and he was waving mostly to the right, which is one reason you are not looking at each other very much. And it was terribly hot. Just blinding all of us.

Mr. Rankin. Now, do you remember as you turned off the main street onto Houston St.?

Mrs. Kennedy. I don't know the name of the street.

Mr. Rankin. That is that one block before you get to the depository building.

Mrs. Kennedy. Well, I remember whenever it was. Mrs. Connally said, "we will soon be there." We could see a tunnel in front of us. Everything was really slow then. And I remember thinking it would be so cool under that tunnel.

Mr. Rankin. And then do

you remember as you turned off of Houston onto Elm right by the depository building?

Mrs. Kennedy. Well, I don't know the names of the streets, but I suppose the building by the depository is what you are talking about?

Mr. Rankin. Yes; that is the street that sort of curves you go down under the overpass.

Mrs. Kennedy. Yes; well, that is when she said to President Kennedy, "You certainly can't say that the people of Dallas haven't given you a nice welcome."

Mr. Rankin. What did she say?

Mrs. Kennedy. I think she said—I don't know if I remember it or I have read it, but you certainly can't, or something. And you know when the car was very slow and there weren't very many people around.

And then—do you want me to tell you what happened?

Mr. Rankin. Yes; if you would, please.

Noise Noted

Mrs. Kennedy. You know, there is always noise in a motorcade and there are always motorcycles besides us, a lot of them backfiring. So I was looking to the left. I guess there was a noise, but it didn't seem like any different noise really because there is so much noise, motorcycles and things. But then suddenly Gov. Connally was yelling, "no, no, no."

Mr. Rankin. Did he turn toward you?

Mrs. Kennedy. No; I was looking this way, to the left, and I heard these terrible noises. You know. And my

right. And all I remember is seeing my husband, he had this sort of quizzical look on his face, and his hand was up, it must have been his left hand. And just as I turned and looked at him, I could see a piece of his skull and I remember it was flesh colored. I remember thinking he just looked as if he had a slight headache. And I just remember seeing that. No blood or anything.

And then he sort of did this (indicating), put his hand to his forehead and fell in my lap.

And then I just remember falling on him and saying, "Oh, no, no, no." I mean, "Oh, my God, they have shot my husband." And "I love you, Jack." I remember I was shouting. And just being down in the car with his head in my lap. And it just seemed an eternity.

You know, then, there were pictures later on of me climbing out the back but I don't remember that at all.

Memory Fails

Mr. Rankin. Do you remember Mr. Hill (Secret Service agent Clinton J. Hill) coming to try to help on the car?

Mrs. Kennedy. I don't remember anything. I was just down like that.

And finally I remember a voice behind me, or something, and then I remember the people in the front seat

of somebody, finally knew something was wrong, and a voice yelling, which must have been Mr. Hill, "Get to the hospital," or maybe it was Mr. Kellerman (another Secret Service man) in the front seat. But someone yelling. I was just down and holding him. (Reference to wounds deleted.)

Mr. Rankin. Do you have any recollection of whether there were one or more shots?

Mrs. Kennedy. Well, there must have been two because the one that made me turn around was Gov. Connally yelling. And it used to confuse me because first I remembered there were three and I used to think my husband didn't make any sound when he was shot. And Gov. Connally screamed. And then I read the other day that it was the same shot that hit them both. But I used to think if I only had been looking to the right I would have seen the first shot hit him, then I could have pulled him down, and then the second shot would not have hit him. But I heard Gov. Connally yelling and that made me turn around, and as I turned to the right my husband was doing this (indicating with hand at neck). He was receiving a bullet. And those are the only two I remember.

Two Shots Heard

And I read there was a third shot. But I don't know just those two.

Mr. Rankin. Do you have

any recollection generally of the speed that you were going, not any precise amount.

Mrs. Kennedy. We were really slowing turning the corner. And there were very few people.

Mr. Rankin. And did you stop at any time after the shots, or proceed about the same way?

Mrs. Kennedy. I don't know, because—I don't think we stopped. But there was such confusion. And I was down in the car and everyone was yelling to get to the hospital and you could hear them on the radio, and then suddenly I remember a sensation of enormous speed,

which must have been when we took off.

Mr. Rankin. And then from there you proceeded as rapidly as possible to the hospital, is that right?

Mrs. Kennedy. Yes.

Mr. Rankin. Do you recall anyone saying anything else during the time of the shooting?

Crying Recalled

Mrs. Kennedy. No. There weren't any words. There was just Gov. Connally's. And then I suppose Mrs. Connally was sort of crying and covering her husband. But I don't remember any words.

And there was a big windshield between—you know—I think. Isn't there?

Mr. Rankin. Between the seats.

Mrs. Kennedy. So you know, those poor men in the front, you couldn't hear them.

Mr. Rankin. Can you think of anything more?

The chairman. No; I think not. I think that is the story and that is what we came for.

We thank you very much, Mrs. Kennedy.

Mr. Rankin. I would just like to ask if you recall Special Agent Kellerman saying anything to you as you came down the street after you turned that corner that you referred to.

Mrs. Kennedy. You mean before the shots?

Mr. Rankin. Yes.

Mrs. Kennedy. Well, I don't, because—you know, it is very hard for them to talk. But I do not remember, just as I don't recall climbing out on the back of the car.

Mr. Rankin. Yes. You have told us what you remember about the entire period as far as you can recall, have you?

Mrs. Kennedy. Yes.

The chairman. Thank you very much, Mrs. Kennedy.