

Assassination: World Given Tragic Details

CA 11-29
All the horror of Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963, as it was experienced by its closest survivors, was revealed last week with the release of 26 volumes of testimony and exhibits recorded by the Warren Commission.

Like the characters in a Greek tragedy, they speak:

Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy:

"We could see a tunnel in front of us. Everything was really slow then and I could remember thinking it would be so cool under that tunnel . . . I heard these terrible noises, you know, and my husband never made any sound . . . 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 then he sort of did this, put his hand to his forehead and fell on my lap . . . and then I just remember falling on him and saying 'Oh my God, they have shot my husband,' and 'I love you Jack' . . . and it seemed an eternity . . . I used to think that if only I had been looking to the right I would have seen the first shot hit him. Then I could have pulled him down and the second shot would not have hit him.'

Agent Sits on Johnson

President Johnson:

"I was startled by the sharp report, but I had no time to speculate . . . because (Secret Service) agent (Rufus) Youngblood turned in a flash . . . hitting me on the shoulder and shouted to all of us in the back seat to get down . . . he vaulted over the back seat and sat on me." (Mr. Johnson's car, two cars behind President Kennedy's at the time the shots were fired, was then driven to Parkland General Hospital). "It was (presidential assistant) Ken O'Donnell who, at about 1:20 p.m., told us the President had died. I think his precise words were 'He's gone.' . . . The whole thing seemed unreal, unbelievable. A few hours earlier I had breakfast with John Kennedy, he was alive, strong,

vigorous. I could not believe now that he was dead. I was shocked and sickened. (Mr. Johnson later at Dallas' Love Field ordered the Presidential plane held up despite advice from high officials that he depart immediately for the safety of Washington.) "I was determined that we would not return to Washington until Mrs. Kennedy was ready, and that we carry the President's body back with us if she wanted."

'A Drift of Blossoms'

Mrs. Ladybird Johnson:

"I cast one last look over my shoulder and saw, in the President's car, a bundle of pink, just like a drift of blossoms, lying on the back seat. I think it was Mrs. Kennedy lying over the President's body." Later when the Johnsons were taken to the airport, she recalls: "I looked up at a building and there already was a flag at halfmast. I think that is when the enormity of what had happened first struck me . . . Lyndon took the oath of office . . . Mrs. Kennedy's dress was stained with blood. Her right glove was caked—that immaculate woman—it was caked with blood . . . I would have done anything to help her, but there was nothing I could do . . ."

Texas Gov. John B. Connally, who was seriously wounded by the President's assassin:

"I felt like someone had hit me in the back . . . I . . . just looked down and I was covered with blood . . . I thought that I had probably been fatally hit. (He doubled up and Mrs. Connally pulled him down on her lap.) . . . "I recall very well, (after the next shot) on my trousers there was one chunk of brain tissue, almost as big as my thumb . . . I said, 'My God, they are going to kill us all!'"

'I . . . Saw the President . . .'

Mrs. Connally:

"I heard a noise . . . and saw the President as he had both hands at his neck . . . I felt, it felt, like spent buckshot falling all over us . . . I . . . could see that it was . . . human matter . . . all over the car . . . Mrs. Kennedy said, 'They have killed my husband. I have his brains in my hand.' She repeated that several times, and that was all the conversation."

Howard Leslie Brennan, a Dallas

steamfitter who later identified Lee Harvey Oswald as the man he saw shoot the President from a sixth-floor window of the Texas School Book Depository:

" . . . something right after this explosion, made me think it was a firecracker being thrown from the Texas bookstore (depository) . . . I glanced up and this man I saw previously (standing in the window) was aiming for his last shot."

Mrs. Marina Oswald said her husband never seemed to have anything against President Kennedy. She con-

cluded her husband had a "sick imagination" and "wanted in any way, whether good or bad, to do something that would make him . . . known in history."

Exhibit diagrams and expert testimony brought to light another tragic irony in the bizarre chain of events which led to Mr. Kennedy's death. The 3% downgrade of the street away from the school book building, plus a slight veer to the right by the President's car at the last moment, automatically compensated for defects in the aiming mechanism (a telescopic sight) of Oswald's mail order rifle. **END**