

Gov. Connally Relives Tragedy Almost Daily

He Bears Emotional, Physical Scars of Assassination; Sudden Noises Startle Him

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AUSTIN, Tex. (AP)—Each time he picks up a fork or spoon Texas Gov. John Connally vividly provides evidence of the volley of rifle shots that killed John F. Kennedy on a Dallas street.

Two years after he was gravely wounded by the same sniper who murdered the President, Connally bears emotional and physical scars of the assassination.

Loud, sudden noises startle him and his wife more than they would most people.

His right wrist, wounded by the bullet that passed through his body, is still so stiff he can't use a fork or spoon properly, he says.

"I cannot turn the wrist. Obviously I am reminded of it (the assassination) every day, every time I eat a meal. I can't rotate the wrist enough to get a fork or spoon to my mouth," Connally says.

Reluctant Consent

And Connally only reluctantly consents to interviews about the assassination, such as the one he gave last week.

"It is no longer a matter of news, of front page information. I do not personally like to relive the tragedy. It should be relegated to history," the tall, handsome 48-year-old governor said.

Connally's office in the capitol, however, has several reminders both of the assassination and his association with Kennedy, who was shot Nov. 22, 1963.

Behind his desk is a large framed photograph taken the morning of the assassination showing Connally, Kennedy and President and Mrs. Johnson bowing their heads in prayer at a breakfast in Fort Worth.

To one side, on a book stand, is a specially bound copy of "The Torch Is Passed," the Associated Press' volume about the assassination, with Connally's name stamped in gold on the cover. On his desk is a souvenir pen set given him when he retired as Kennedy's Secretary of the Navy in 1962.

Relives Tragic Day

Despite the passage of two years, the assassination is relived again and again in his thoughts, the governor said.

"I think about it constantly — almost every day. I think the intensity of feeling is diminished because memory fortunately dulls remembrance of a great tragedy," he said. "Each day I see the scars from the operation. It is something I am not going to escape from, and I try to put it in proper perspective."

Connally, who was hit with one bullet, has scars on



TRAGIC DAY—Texas Gov. John Connally reflects upon tragic day two years ago when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas. Connally was seriously wounded by assassin and the memories are still very vivid in his everyday thoughts.

UPI Telephoto

his back, chest, right wrist and thigh.

The assassination and its deep impact on his philosophy of living were on Connally's mind in making his decision to seek a third term as governor next year, he said.

"Beyond any question it was something I thought of a great deal, not from the standpoint of fear but of how much time a person has to do the things he has to do and in terms of my wife and family.

Right Side Weak

"I have had proved to me in a very forceful way that you never know when you will be called. This conscious thought will always be with me . . . What time I have I want to spend in labors of lasting import."

Besides the stiff wrist Connally said he still feels "weakness on my entire right side." Because of the large amount of desk work he must do, the governor lifts weights to keep in shape, he said, and cannot raise his right arm as high as his left.

But, he said, he feels no pain.

Connally said he and Mrs. Connally, who also was in the open car with Kennedy when the shots were fired, are still shaken by sudden loud noises.

"Both of us were visibly shaken," he said, when a 19-gun salute was fired during a visit to Texas by German Chancellor Ludwig Erhard.

But, Connally said, he is a hunter and will continue to hunt.

"It doesn't bother me as long as I anticipate or know a rifle or shotgun is going to be fired," he said.

The governor said he has driven past, but not stopped to visit, the site selected near the assassination site for a memorial to Kennedy.

"I need nothing to remind me of him or of the tragic occurrence," he said.

No longer does he receive letters, as he once did, from people who in some way blame him for the assassination. And he no longer finds the hostility to Texas and Dallas which immediately followed the assassination.

Connally said his family has heard from the slain President's widow since the assassination, "but not recently. Our paths . . . do not cross."

The governor was asked his feelings about Dallas Dist. Atty. Henry Wade's recent offer to recommend clemency for Jack Ruby, who was sentenced to death for slaying Presidential assassin Lee Harvey Oswald. Connally has power to commute the sentence to life imprisonment if various legal steps place the question before him.

"I wouldn't like to pre-judge what actions I would take. I would rather wait until it reaches me for decision before I decide what I'll do," he said. **END**