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UPI
Moments before the end, smiles and a wave



UPI
A bullet crashes, and the President slumps into his wife's arms

THE DAY KENNEDY DIED

In one sudden, swift, awful convulsion of history last week, the majesty and the burdens of the Presidency of the United States shifted from one man to another.

In a shattering moment, at once random and calculated, John Fitzgerald Kennedy was cut down in his 47th year by an assassin's bullet in Dallas, Texas.

In the brief span of 30 minutes, incredibly, this tanned, vigorous, hale young man—the youngest ever elected President—was dead.

In just 98 minutes more, standing aboard the President's Air Force jet with Mr. Kennedy's ashen widow at his side, Lyndon Baines Johnson recited the 34-word oath of office and became the 36th President of the U.S.

And in 48 hours the assassin himself was shot dead.

The tumble of events was stunning and incomprehensible—the more so in all the uncertainties of the "dangerous, untidy world" John Kennedy had diagnosed just eight days before his death and now bequeathed to his successor.

In that world, the man who lives at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue has become the pivotal figure, charged with the leadership of free men everywhere in an age when one misstep could bring down a nuclear doomsday.

The setting only magnified the loss of the man who had infused that office with a youthful, direct, and vigorous style unmatched since the days of Theodore Roosevelt.

Disunity—and Unity, Too: The assassination—charged to a self-styled Marxist who once defected from the U.S. to the Soviet Union—was an act of disunity.

Yet it produced its own unity, a communion of disbelief and sorrow and anger that touched 190 million Americans. In this age of split-second communications, the news of the shooting crossed the nation like a shock wave. For 30 agonizing minutes, Americans heard and waited and kept the death watch in unprecedented numbers.

It was a moment of frightening discontinuity.

Yet it demonstrated once again the remarkable continuity of this oldest of constitutional republics. For the eighth time, a President had died in office—four of them at the hands of an assassin. But, just 107 minutes after Mr. Kennedy's

death, the ritual act of succession had been performed, and the two Presidents were homeward bound together.

Mr. Kennedy had been close to death before. Like any President, he had been threatened innumerable times—870 by mail in his first year alone. Once before, after a difficult back operation, the last rites of his church had been uttered over him. And years before that, when a Japanese destroyer knifed his fragile PT-109 in two, he said, "This is how it feels to be killed."

That Certain Smile: Yet only his political life expectancy seemed to concern him during his last week of life. Still an unannounced candidate for a second term, he swung first across Florida and then into Texas. Though the trips were advertised as nonpolitical, the President was wearing that certain smile. And he was, as always, careless of his own security. In the glow of Southern sunshine and the friendly crowds that lined his way, he had the protective plastic bubble-top of his custom-made blue Lincoln limousine lowered so he could stand and wave and smile as he rode. But then, hadn't every U.S. President since William McKinley traveled in open cars? And hadn't the Secret Service checked every foot he would travel?

The Texas glow was particularly comforting. The President was making encouraging headway on one prime mission—smoothing over a bitter factional fight between a tory Democratic bloc led by Vice President Johnson and Gov. John Connally and a liberal coalition around Sen. Ralph Yarborough. His wife Jacqueline—making her first campaign journey with him since the 1960 primaries—was wowing the crowds at every stop: San Antonio, Houston, Fort Worth, and now Dallas.

The President was wowing them, too. He started the day in Fort Worth, talking to a crowd of rank-and-file Democrats in his hotel parking lot, then to a Chamber of Commerce breakfast inside. The chamber gave him a broad-brimmed hat; the President, smiling, promised to try it on back home at the White House. He put in a happy 95th birthday call to former Vice President John Nance Garner at Uvalde. "God bless you," the grizzled Cactus Jack said

SPECIAL SECTION

into the phone. "You're my President and I love you. I hope you stay in there forever."

At 11:37 a.m., the President's big fan-jet—Air Force One—settled in at Dallas's Love Field. He and Mrs. Kennedy, carrying a bouquet of red roses, shook hands with the whooping crowd across a chain fence. Then they slipped into the back seat of the Presidential limousine—Mr. Kennedy on the right, his wife beside him. Governor Connally and his wife took the jump seats. Three of the President's 36 Secret Service escorts rode up front, one on a side platform, a carload more in the "Queen Mary"—a bulletproof security car—close behind. Yarborough joined the Johnsons in the third car in the twelve-car motorcade, and off it rumbled for the 10-mile trip through downtown Dallas to the President's next speaking date—a civic luncheon at the Dallas Trade Mart.

The President and the Rightists: As the President well knew, Dallas is a citadel of right-wing strength. Only a month before, rightist pickets had spat on his U.N. ambassador, Adlai Stevenson, and rapped him with a picket placard. Mr. Kennedy had tailored his speech accordingly—a stringing attack on the radical right. Yet, to his pleasant surprise, thousands of cheering Dallas residents—shirt-sleeved in the 76-degree warmth—lined his route ten and twelve deep, with barely a hostile placard in sight. Through the downtown ride, he stood and waved. Then, as the motorcade rolled at its 25-mile-an-hour clip down Main Street toward a triple underpass in an industrial area edging downtown, he sat back and chatted happily with the Connallys. "Well," said Mrs. Connally, "you can't say Dallas isn't friendly today."

Crack!

A rifle shot split the air.

Crack! Crack!

Two more followed.

The President of the United States—caught apparently by the first—spun in his seat. "I thought it was a backfire," said Dallas Patrolman James M. Chaney, who was riding a motorcycle 6 feet from the right rear fender of the President's car. "The President jerked his head around . . . Then [came] the second shot and his head exploded in blood . . ."

Turning to look, Governor Connally took the third bullet just below the right shoulder blade. It ripped out through his chest, pierced his wrist, and lodged in his thigh. But the turn saved his life.

For a chaotic moment, the motorcade ground to an uncertain halt.

"Oh, no! Oh, no!" Jacqueline Kennedy cried over and over, tumbling across her husband's body to shield him. His arm reached out, rigid, his fist clenched; she clasped it in one white-gloved hand.

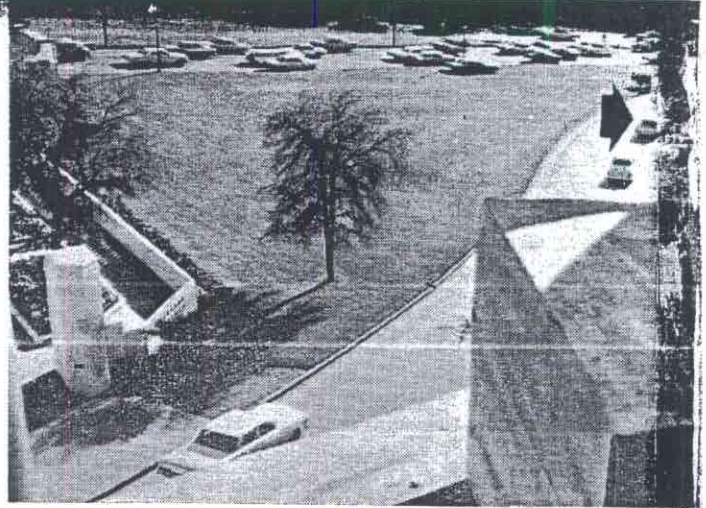
Secret Service agent Clint Hill vaulted from his perch on a platform at the left rear fender into the back seat and fell across them both.

Governor Connally slumped into his wife's arms.

An agent up front jumped to his feet, grabbed at the radiotelephone and called to police riding ahead: "Let's go straight to the nearest hospital." Another yelled back to the Johnson car: "Get down! Get down!" The Vice President, his wife, and Yarborough ducked to the floorboards.

Horror on the Curb: And all about was chaos. Secret Service men bounded out of the Queen Mary, one with a submachine gun at the ready. People screamed and wept and ran and fell to the ground. A Negro snatched up his child and dashed off; a motorcycle cop jumped the curb, drew his gun, and chased him.

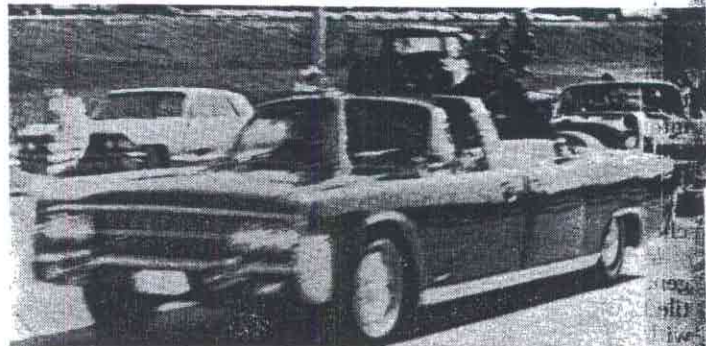
In that moment, a reporter glanced up at the Texas School Book Depository, a building 100 yards off the roadway to the right. He saw a rifle disappear into a sixth-floor corner window. Yet events moved so fast that none of the security forces glimpsed the sniper. "There was nothing we could



From this window a sniper aimed at the official car as it passed the spot marked by the arrow.



... Mr. Kennedy slumped in the back seat of the car, his horror-stricken wife and a guard trying to help.



... Followed by a submachine-gun-toting Secret Service man, the car sped the dying President to the hospital.



... While stunned spectators hugged the ground in horror, cameramen ratched their cameras for history.

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SPECIAL SECTION

one agent groaned. "Nothing." Reflexively, the President's Secret Service driver started the car and roared toward Parkland Memorial Hospital, miles away. "Take it easy, take it easy!" another said. "If he's not dead, I don't want to kill him now." The driver slowed to 60—half top speed. In the back seat, an agent stood and pounded his fists against the back of the car in anger and frustration. The President already was dying. To the clinical eye of medicine, he was already dead.

The limousine swept beneath the overpass, up a ramp onto Stemmons freeway, off again—on two wheels—on the 45-degree turn into the last mile and a quarter lap along Industrial and Harry Hines boulevards. The 77-block dash to the emergency entrance of the tan, thirteen-story hospital took nine minutes.

Blood and Roses: When the car pulled up, the President lay unconscious on his back, his head cradled in Mrs. Kennedy's lap, his blood splattering her navy-blue wool suit. On the floor, three wilted red roses and a ragged bouquet of asters lay in a puddle of blood.

Mrs. Kennedy helped agents and hospital attendants put the President on a stretcher. Tearless and numb, she walked at his side, clinging to him, as he was carried onto the loading dock. Close behind, on another stretcher, came Connally. The Vice President followed, dazed and clutching his side.

The two men—Connally first, then Mr. Kennedy—were wheeled through the double doors, past a waiting room, down a tan-tiled corridor, and through a second pair of swinging doors into the emergency ward. Connally was called into Emergency Room Two for a five-minute checkup; from there he went to a surgical suite for a successful chest operation.

Mr. Kennedy was taken into Emergency Room One—a windowless, gray-tiled, 10- by 15-foot cubicle banked with cabinets and spidery medical equipment—and placed gingerly on a stark operating table, its black leather pad covered with a white sterile slip.

Feverish Race: Outside, Mrs. Kennedy stood between the Johnsons, holding their hands, waiting. Aides and congressmen wandered aimlessly about. "They carried him in," Yarborough said, gray-faced. "The President is hurt bad."

The first physicians to glimpse the President knew it was too late. One bullet had laid open the back of his head with bone-crushing force, burrowing with a wake of skull fragments into his brain. Another—or perhaps the same bullet—ripped his throat just below the Adam's apple. "Medically speaking," said one doctor, who saw the President come in, "he was dead when he was hit. He had a lethal wound and it



UPI His wife and Mrs. Kennedy at his side, the new President is sworn in

was apparent, medically, that he could not recover."

On the table, he drew one sharp breath and then his body lay still.

Nevertheless, some ten doctors in Parkland's emergency room went to work to try and revive the President. First, Dr. James Carrico inserted an oxygen tube into the President's mouth, but because of the neck wound, the life-sustaining oxygen wasn't getting through.

Dr. Malcolm Perry dashed in from the cafeteria and saw Mr. Kennedy, his suit coat, shirt, and back brace already stripped off. "I thought to myself he's a much bigger man than his pictures," Dr. Perry said. "My second thought was that here's the most important man in the world. After that I was too busy to think."



Associated Press

The surgeon pulled on rubber gloves and—without stopping to scrub up or put on a surgical gown—performed a tracheotomy, splitting the windpipe at the wound and placing the oxygen tube in the throat. Other doctors gave the President transfusions of whole blood (O negative, the "universal donor" type).

Mrs. Kennedy had slipped into the room; Perry glimpsed her over his shoulder as he worked. "She wouldn't leave," he said. "She's a real thoroughbred. She stayed with him all the time."

No Breath: The physicians sensed that blood and air were accumulating in the President's chest cavity. Perry then performed a closed-chest drainage: another tube was placed between the ribs to keep the chest area free of fluids and air so that the lungs would not collapse. But no breath came.

Finally, standing on a stool for leverage, Perry began kneading Mr. Kennedy's breastbone from the outside—a desperate effort to get the heart muscles working and blood coursing again. When Parkland's chief neurosurgeon, Dr. Kemp Clark, arrived, an electrocardiograph machine was hooked up to keep track of the heartbeat. Clark watched the graph paper from the machine for a few minutes, then turned to Perry and said: "It's too late, Mac." Dr. Marion T. Jenkins, monitoring the oxygen equipment, pulled a white sheet across the body.

In the feverish attempt to revive the President, nobody noticed the clock. Clark arbitrarily set the time of death at 1 p.m.—30 minutes after the shooting.

At 12:57 p.m.—27 minutes after the shooting—two Dallas Roman Catholic priests, the Very Rev. Oscar L. Huber and the Rev. James Thompson, were

Connally: Saved by a turn