

Dallas: City of Patience, Decency

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An Editorial from The Dallas Times Herald

It is time to say a few things. We, of Dallas, had believed that curing time would give understanding to fellow Americans whose arm we need.

But now we must be heard — not from rancor, not from anger, not from the shallowness of provincialism. We hope, we pray that our voice shall not be raised again.

Dallas is an American city. It is not some outpost of evil. It is people who are patient, decent and very normal. Our mistakes, like any metropolis in the great growth of this land, come into public view.

We are not cardboard creatures of political hatred. We do not bumble and destroy. We are just people who, until little more than three years ago, were known the breadth of this land as the tolerant, the compassionate, the men of believable brotherhood.

We had tragedy, deep tragedy. We prayed. We set about the next hour to gird the soul of this city. We turned to the strength of a new future. On the front page of this newspaper, a man with wet cheeks had words to write on that day:

"Terrible history has been made in Dallas, and the magnitude of our city's sorrow can only be measured against the enormity of the deed.

"John F. Kennedy, President of the United States of America, is dead. No matter what the explanation of the act, the awful reality of it overwhelms us. He died here.

"We do not know now, we may never know why it happened in Dallas. And it is no comfort to our grief that an insane chance, operating with blind destiny, brought our President's death to us.

"But this we know, that as a city we must show the world the deep unity of our grief, the depths of the stunned void that is in each of us.

"Let us go into the open churches, the cathedrals, the synagogues, and there let us pray to God to teach us love and forgiveness. In the quiet of our homes, let us search our hearts and, through the terrible cleansing power of our grief, remove any vestiges of bitterness and hate.

"What happened here could have happened in any city. But first there had to be the seeds of hate — and we must pray that Dallas can never supply the atmosphere for tragedy to grow again.

"The bullet that felled our President was molded in an unstable world. But to our great sorrow, it found its mark here."

Many days, many weeks, many months have passed since that day. But the citizens of this community have only grown stronger and the pledge above has been followed.

Now, in another chapter, we are thrust into history again—history that never shall release us.

The death of Jack Ruby has brought new arrows from the shoulder slings of our critics. Again, in the eyes of distant commentators and surface critics, we are buffoons and bumblers. We are "Co-Conspirators" who, says the Communist Russian press, might have deliberately injected cancer cells into the veins of Ruby.

We understand, and can dismiss, the venom of the Communist lie. But we can only ask forgiveness for the other critics who won't, or can't forget. We ask that they join us on the path we have set for ourselves.

In this city there is a high degree of decency, respect, admiration and continuing grief. Very patiently we have labored to close a wound.

We wince only when the misinformed outsider rips the sutures.

Recent events, which again have focused attention on the City of Dallas, moved Felix McKnight, Executive Vice-President and Editor, to write this editorial for The Dallas Times Herald. It was published on Jan. 7.

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