

# PLAYBOY'S HISTORY OF ASSASSINATION IN AMERICA

PART IV

## THE END OF CAMELOT

article

By JAMES MCKINLEY

*the first of two parts on the murder of John F. Kennedy, possibly the most mysterious and controversial of American assassinations—a traumatic event that changed us all*

The people will forget in a few days and there will be another President.

—LEE HARVEY OSWALD,  
November 23, 1963

FOR SOME, it was the muffled drums, the posthumous pulse of John Fitzgerald Kennedy sounding in ceaseless cadence. For some, the hideous yellow catering lift bellied against Air Force One, the somnambulistic widow in bloody clothes, the bronze casket burnished by TV lights descending to the tarmac's ring of somber, famous faces. For some, the clockwork quadrille of the deathwatch guard, or De Gaulle marching tall behind the horse-drawn caisson, or John-John's farewell salute. For this writer, it was Caroline's small right hand reaching as though



for verification beneath the covering flag to touch the unyielding surface of her father's casket—"Daddy's too big for that," she'd said—there in the rotunda of the Capitol of the United States, kneeling next to her mother, that at last brought into the mind with a bullet's force the irreconcilable fact that the 35th President of the United States was dead, slain in Dallas by, it was said, a punk with a mail-order rifle.

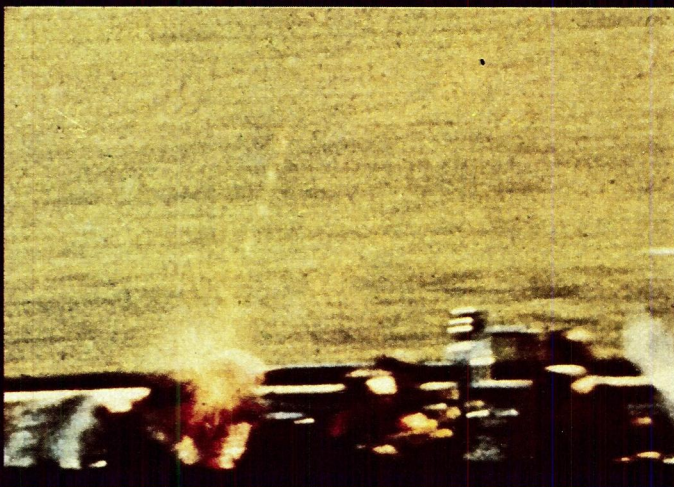
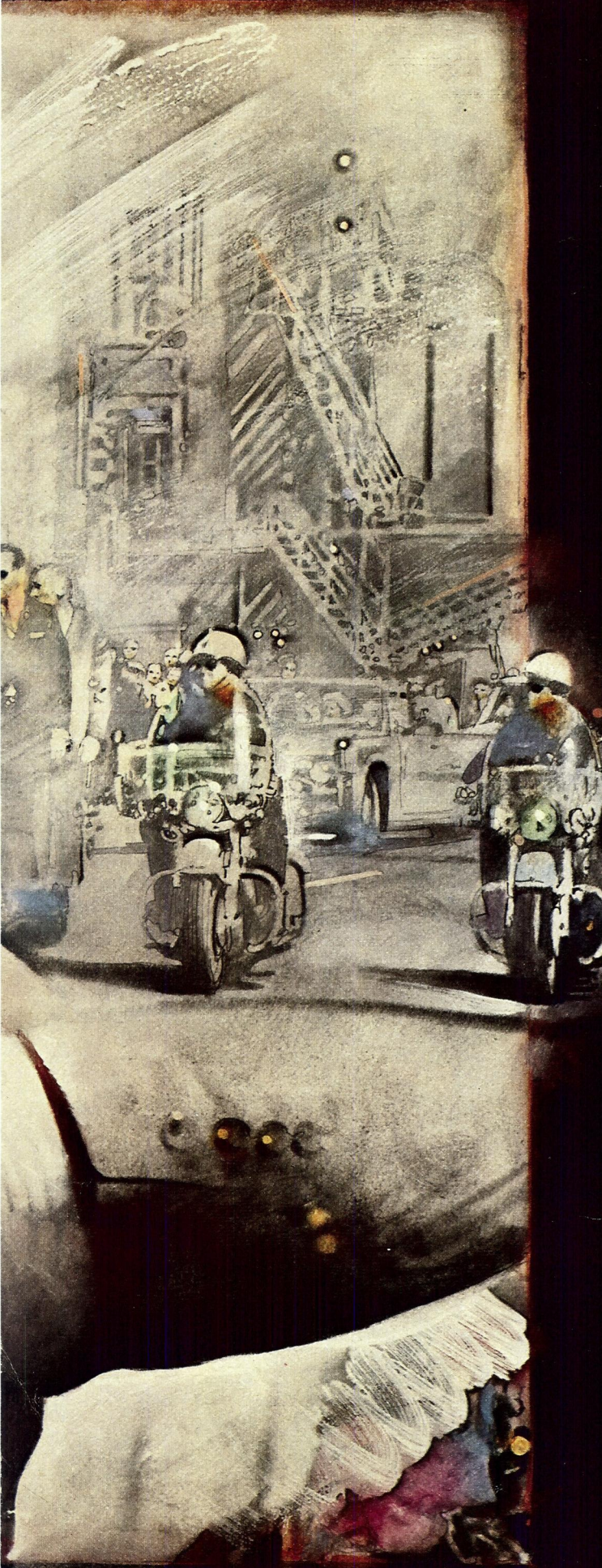
That, assuredly, was the message. However it came to each of us, collectively we learned that the truce of 62 years had been broken, that a citizen had again murdered an American President and, pre-eminently, that the event had caught us in a new world of instant mass communication that conveyed the images to us—the funereal tableaux, the people, even the murder of the President's accused murderer—in a telethon that threw us forever out of the slow-motion historical world of Lincoln and Garfield and McKinley into our own hard-edged, video-taped nowness. History for us had stopped. We were really there, so much so that a half hour after Kennedy was shot, 68 percent of his adult citizenry (more than 75,000,000 people) had the word. So much so that by late afternoon of Friday, November 22, 1963, an estimated 99.8 percent of the American people knew their President was dead and that somebody named Lee Harvey Oswald, 24 years old, was suspected of the killing. Back in that other world, in 1865, news of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln—our first Presidential victim, whom Kennedy admired, to whom he was compared and on whose catafalque he lay in state—*(text continued on page 128)*

John and Jacqueline Kennedy, the closest America ever came to having a truly royal family, arrived at Love Field on a brilliantly clear, warm Dallas morning. Jackie and John spent exactly 53 more minutes together.



ILLUSTRATION BY MARTIN HOFFMAN

History has never had a sense of propriety: The moment that forever changed our lives is caught incongruously on a bystander's cheap 8mm home-movie camera and brought—blurry, shaky and out of focus—into the national consciousness. The instant of John Kennedy's death will now always be remembered in these desperate attempts to enlarge the tiny frames over and over until the horror of the President's skull and brain fragmenting into thousands of minute sparkling crystals of light in the brilliant Dallas sun becomes nothing more than a pattern of bright red and yellow dots on the pages of a history book.



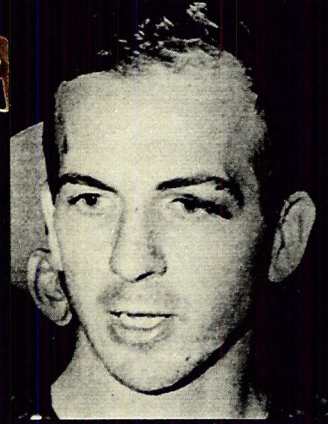


Even before Air Force One lifted off from Dallas, Lyndon Johnson was our 36th President. "Now," he said after Judge Sarah Hughes administered the oath, "let's get this thing airborne."

didn't reach Oregon until two months after John Wilkes Booth's act in Ford's Theater. But in our new world, its slain leader arriving at Andrews Air Force Base from the unlikely latitudes of Dallas, we all at once and as a nation knew and felt—were *made* in this age of media to know and feel, to participate in—a martyrdom for the handsome, bright, brash President who was so brutally murdered right before our eyes. For four days, a great national catharsis swept us



Contrary to popular belief, Oswald's Mannlicher-Carcano 91/38 was a deadly weapon at moderate distances.



clean of any dream that we were immune to this horror. It filled us with pity for the lovely First Lady, with fear for the future. We wept. Most of us, that is. A few did not, were glad John Kennedy was dead. A few were brought to thoughts of vengeance, notably a strip-joint operator in Dallas itself. A few stopped mourning to realize the martyr image was only one, a bluish picture that altered John Kennedy as much as the embalmer's cosmetics. Distorted the tough Irish politician, the whiskey baron's progeny, the philanderer. Covered over achievements like the Test Ban Treaty, the Missile Crisis, the assault on organized crime,

Almost immediately, a 24-year-old man named Oswald was charged with the crime. Two days later, he was shot to death on live television by Jack Ruby, the owner of a sleazy night club.

the pending tax-cut bill and Civil Rights Bill. Prettified the dreadful and portentous failures like the Bay of Pigs.

Yet, most Americans watched, wept and wondered what had happened in Dallas. How had this come to him? To us? We could understand our other assassinations, because history rendered them as somebody else's sorrow. We could objectify the attempt on Harry Truman back in 1950, the doomed charge by two Puerto Rican nationalists with pistols against a President's impregnable home, could admire their courage, even their cause of independence. But their attack had failed. The sniper in Dallas had not, and now there were the drums, the riderless horse, the caisson, the foreign leaders, the widow in black, the hard-faced brothers, the innocent children, over and over and over, and how could we begin to grasp how all that had come to be?

The assassination of John Kennedy would freight with significance almost all its circumstances, almost every person, place or event connected with it. That fact alone testifies to the killing's shock effect, to the resultant need to know what happened and, again, to the information blitz that provided the facts on which the myriad speculations and conclusions were built. But there was little gainsaying the facts themselves or what seemed to be facts, as they emerged during and after the national mourning.

For a start, John Kennedy didn't want to be in Texas that day. "I wish I weren't going to Texas," he told Pierre Salinger. And with reason. Though L.B.J.'s presence on his ticket had helped him carry Texas in 1960 against Nixon—who was even then in Dallas meeting with some Pepsi-Cola executives—Kennedy knew 1964 could be different. The state's Democratic Party throbbled with disagreements. There was Kennedy's loyal liberal faction, a minority led by Senator Ralph Yarborough, who was anathema to the rightists like Governor John Connally, who was a onetime protégé of Lyndon Johnson and who was now a man with large ambitions that could be achieved only with the aid of Texas' rich right-wingers (some said Connally might jump the party soon and serve as Senator Barry Goldwater's running mate). Between them stood the Vice-President, a consummate politician but bereft now of his Lone Star power base and apprehensive to the point of impotence over rumors that J.F.K. might dump him in 1964. Only the President, his advisors told him, could hold things together. Hence the political trip to Texas, and hence the President's joy when, uncharacteristically, his wife said she'd go along. Texans surely wouldn't be rude to such a lady as Jackie.

Except perhaps in Dallas. That peculiar city was scheduled as the next-to-last

stop on the visit. Only a motorcade to a luncheon speech at the new Trade Mart. Yet even that could be dicey. "Big D" bubbled with hate for the liberal Federal Government (Nixon got 63 percent of Dallas' vote) and any hint of its accommodation with Commies, Jews or niggers. It wasn't particularly fond of Catholics, either, being as it was 97 percent Protestant. It was active hate, too, passed around in sniggering jokes. Dallas led the nation in per-capita murders (72 percent committed with guns). It was home to IMPEACH EARL WARREN billboards, to the reactionary fulminations of H. L. Hunt and retired Major General Edwin A. Walker, to John Birchers, Minutemen and Christian Crusaders, to K.O. THE KENNEDYS bumper stickers and other signs of the Old Frontier. In 1960, a fun-loving bunch of Dallasites had tossed a cup of spit at Lyndon and Lady Bird, presumably protesting their alliance with the mackerel-snapping Kennedys. Adlai Stevenson had been roughed up in a crowd on UN Day just a month before Kennedy's visit. He'd considered warning the President about the mood in Dallas. But then, the President could have read it in *The Dallas Morning News*. That rightist paper had called him a Judas for his Test Ban Treaty and the Cuban fiasco, and its publisher, E. M. Dealey—whose father had a plaza, built by the socialist WPA, named for him downtown—once had attacked the President's left-wing sell-out policies at a White House get-together. It was at people like Dealey that John Kennedy's Trade Mart speech would be aimed. "Today, other voices are heard in the land," he would say, "voices preaching doctrines . . . which apparently assume that words will suffice without weapons, that vituperation is as good as victory and that peace is a sign of weakness." Kennedy would tell them that straight out and proceed on his way, although he hoped his plan to start withdrawing the advisors from Vietnam didn't provoke trouble while he was in Texas. Strange, they were so religious down there, but they didn't seem to remember a cause had to be just. His speech would conclude with the *Bible's* words, "Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."

Many were the premonitions suggesting the Lord wasn't keeping Dallas just now. A Democratic National Committeeman from Texas urged the President to cancel the Dallas stopover, and an editor in Austin, which was to be the last public stop before going to L.B.J.'s Pedernales paradise, wrote, "He will not get through this without something happening to him." In Washington, Hale Boggs and Hubert Humphrey cautioned Kennedy about the trip (on November 21, Humphrey, with J.F.K. on his way, told the National Association for Mental Health that the "wild men of reaction" were

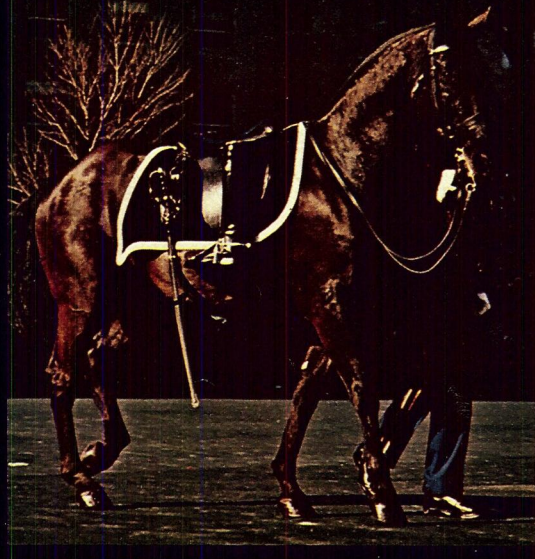
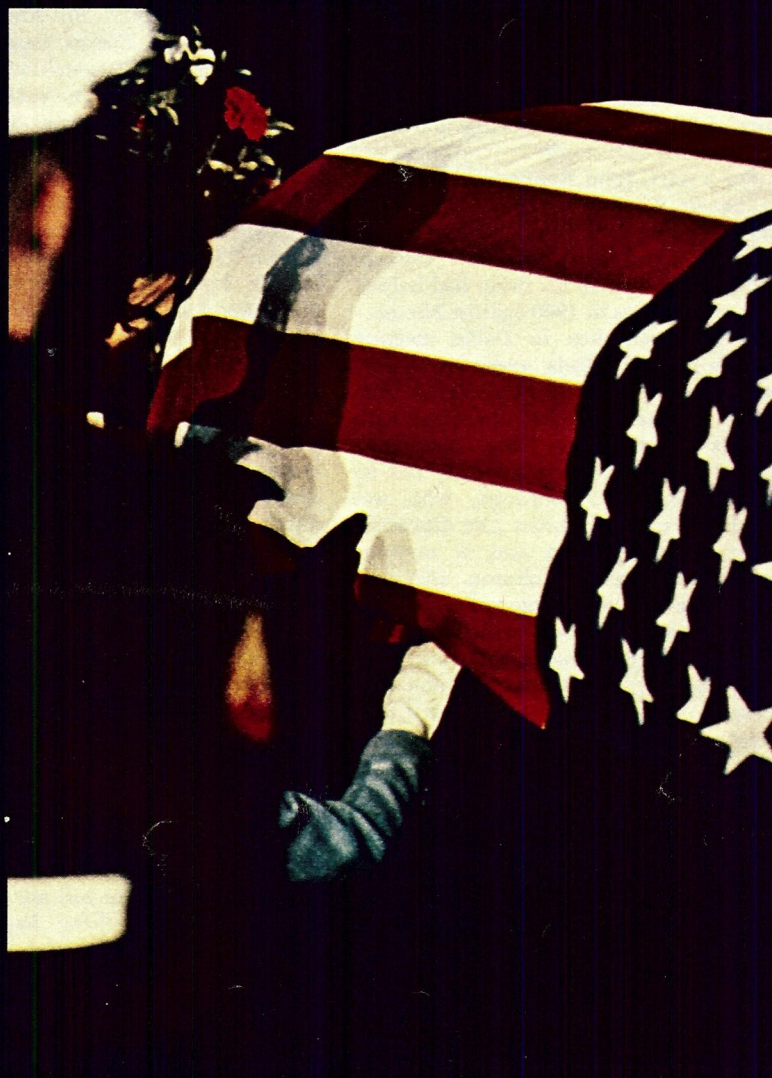
"deeply and fundamentally disturbed . . . the act of an emotionally unstable person or irresponsible citizen can strike down a great leader"). More directly, the calm J. William Fulbright said to the President, "Dallas is a very dangerous place. I wouldn't go there. Don't you go." But go he must, he decided, as a politician, to try and heal the factional wounds and to gain currency for the 1964 campaign. At 10:45 A.M., Thursday, November 21, the choppers lifted off the White House lawn for the 12-minute hop to Andrews AFB and Air Force One. Two-year-old John-John rode along. He loved his father and airplanes, both passionately, and when the helicopters sat down beside the graceful blue-and-white 707, he begged to go along. "You can't," the President said. Then, to his son's Secret Service guardian, Kennedy said, "You take care of John, Mr. Foster."

The Secret Service was supposed to take care of the President, too. With the ascent of Air Force One, their task became complicated. The security routines in Washington were fixed and proved. On the road, they were not. In San Antonio, Houston, Fort Worth, Dallas, Austin, men of the Protective Research Section had coordinated their plans with local police, checked out routes, secured buildings, examined theirs and FBI files for homicidal threats. But they couldn't be sure. Dallas would be most difficult tomorrow. A long motorcade from Love Field to the luncheon in the Presidential limousine (they called it SS 100 X) and, even with the Lincoln's bubble top on in bad weather, it wasn't bulletproof. The Trade Mart itself was hard to seal, had 16 catwalks, summoning fears of some maniac with a rifle (Connally had lobbied for the Trade Mart site as a favor to influential businessmen). The job was complicated by the President (the Boss, they called him, though his code name was Lancer). Like Abraham Lincoln, he detested the shield his bodyguards put around him. He was forever breaking out to plunge into crowds, shaking hands and giving away PT-109 tie clasps (hell of a commander, his rightish military critics snorted, lost his only ship) and, not long before, he'd told an agent to "keep those Ivy League charlatans off the back of the car." So there he'd be in Dallas, protected mostly by what they reckoned an inefficient police force; there where that very morning of November 21 some hatemongers had printed and passed out 5000 mug-shot handbills accusing the President of treason for not invading Cuba, for having Stevenson turn "the sovereignty of the U.S. over to the Communist-controlled United Nations"; there, where in that morning's *News* and *Times Herald*, anyone could read the route of the motorcade and its timing, even that it would go slow so all of Dallas could see

(continued on page 142)

## WASHINGTON IN MOURNING

Jackie refused to leave her husband's body even for a moment. When Air Force One arrived at Andrews Air Force Base, she rode with the casket on the lift, rather than walk down the steps, then sat by it in the ambulance on the way to Bethesda Naval Hospital, her clothes still covered with John Kennedy's blood. Having kept her composure too long already, she finally broke down at the funeral, where the riderless horse carried only the sword and reversed pair of boots. At the Capitol, Caroline Kennedy, then only five years old, reached beneath the flag covering the coffin. "Daddy's too big for that," she had said earlier. She didn't know how right she was.



## END OF CAMELOT (continued from page 130)

the President, right there he'd be riding along in an open car. There were 20,000 windows along the motorcade's path, too many to watch, and when on November 18 the Secret Service's advance man, Winston Lawson, rode it in company with the Dallas office's Forrest V. Sorrels and Dallas police chief Jesse Curry, all three remarked how they'd be sitting ducks. Toward the end of the ride, turning from Main Street into Houston Street, Lawson saw an ungainly tan-brick building with concrete latticework marking its first floor and windows marching up past a ledge and final story to a big, blinking-time Hertz Rent-a-Car sign. He asked, "What's the Texas School Book Depository?"

Lee Harvey Oswald could have told him. It was where, since mid-October, he made \$1.25 an hour as a clerk (not enough to buy a rifle, he later told police), which meant pulling books out of boxes to match order forms and sending them downstairs to the offices of his boss, Roy Truly, who disliked Kennedy. Inside, the warehouse wasn't what you'd expect of a repository of learning. Drab offices, a tawdry second-floor lunchroom, two grimy freight elevators, claustrophobic storage space crammed with cartons, lit by 60-watt bulbs, surrounded by brick walls that dropped scabs of paint to the buckling wood floors. Up in the sixth story, they were relaying the floor, and the boxes were moved to the southeastern corner of the building, close to the windows overlooking Dealey Plaza's mock-Grecian peristyles and pagodas. Oswald worked up there sometimes. From the southeast window, you could see straight out to where Main turns into Houston Street, then directly below where Houston turned into Elm Street, then traversing right, Elm Street curved to go through a triple underpass, the railroad tracks on top, and on out to the ramp up to Stemmons Freeway, the way to the Trade Mart. A superb view from an ugly building, where Lee did his menial job. He'd been born in New Orleans on October 18, 1939, two months after his father's death, to Marguerite Oswald, a hulking, pouty woman who resented mightily the demise of this, her second husband. Lee grew up alone in, then out of orphanages and relatives' homes, because his mother worked. But even though he slept with her in their various homes in New Orleans and Fort Worth until he was 11, that didn't fill him with love. Marguerite's third marriage, in 1945, provided a temporary father until divorce ended it in 1948. But then his mother worked again. Lee protested her neglect by skipping school. Once he chased his half-brother with a knife, and another time threatened the half-brother's wife with a blade. It seems

these defiances didn't satisfy, any more than did geographical changes. They kept moving, on to New York, then back to New Orleans. Though he was smart (I.Q. of 118), he quit school after the ninth grade and enlisted in the manly Marine Corps, as had his brother, Robert. Even in that homogenized milieu, something in him turned people off. Fellow Marines called him "Ozzie Rabbit," and thought he was intelligent and well-informed but strangely withdrawn and secretive. Yet, he did his duties (albeit court-martialed twice—once for possession of an unregistered private firearm, a .22 derringer that accidentally went off and wounded him, and once for gross insubordination, which included spilling a drink on an officer—a trick that helped earn him four weeks in the stockade). He acquired basic military skills. He qualified as Sharpshooter with the M-1, became a private, first class—aviation electronics operator, which meant he tracked aircraft on radar and scanned their radio signals, notably from the Atsugi base in Japan, where some U-2 flights over Russia originated. Lee liked Russia, or the idea of Russia. He'd discovered Marxism at 15, and two perceptions stuck with him: It was for the downtrodden, he saw, and hence antiestablishment; and it was taboo in America. Of Marx's complexity, of the moral subtleties of the dialectic, Oswald spoke little, though he did study the Russian language and profess *ad nauseam* to the gyrenes the wonders of the Soviet system.

After nearly three years, Oswald sought and was granted, on September 11, 1959, an early "hardship" discharge to go to Fort Worth and take care of his impoverished and disabled mother, now a resident there. Marguerite was not disabled long, apparently, since by October 16 Lee Harvey Oswald was in Moscow trying to defect to Russia and become a Soviet citizen. As it turned out, he was successful at neither. Although he ranted to the U.S. Embassy and wrote letters forsaking his citizenship, he never forfeited his passport or completed the papers necessary to terminate his citizenship. He didn't become a Soviet citizen, either, since he tired of their system within 18 months and wanted to come home. He was delayed, however, by bureaucratic tangles until June 1962. In between, he made an insincere attempt at suicide (to dramatize his sincerity about wanting to be a Russian). He was then assigned work at a radio and TV factory in Minsk, where he fell in love, was jilted and then rebounded to marry a pharmacist, the unhappy niece of a Minsk M.V.D. official and to father a daughter. He bought a shotgun and hunted a little, talked Marxism and continued fitful attempts at higher education (including a try at enrolling in

Moscow's Patrice Lumumba Friendship University, unfortunately reserved for citizens of the Third World). In general, he lived what for most Russians would be a pampered life. His pay, as was customary with defectors, was supplemented. He was given a good apartment. But he didn't like the authoritarianism of Russia any better than Marine Corps discipline, perhaps felt insufficiently rewarded for his secrets (nothing that threatened U.S. security) or his devotion to Marx's cause. The difficulties of obtaining exit visas vexed him and he wrote to Senator John Tower for help. He beseeched his brother and mother for financial aid (Marguerite suggested capitalizing on the story of his defection—after Kennedy's death she ruefully remarked, "Moneywise, I got took"). With their help, patience and \$435.71 in borrowed State Department funds, Lee Harvey Oswald, with wife and child, returned to the United States on June 13, 1962.

As we shall see detailed in the second part of the Kennedy story, the days from then until November 22, 1963, spun away from Oswald in a downward spiral. For now, it is enough to see their gross direction. Items: A succession of plebeian jobs, the best of which was as a photoprint trainee for a graphics company. Between jobs, unemployment checks—some obtained on spurious grounds. Increasing tension with Marina, who found him in his native land to be irritable, reclusive, sexually inactive, tyrannical and cruel. Lee beat her and discouraged her attempts to learn English—Russian may have been their only remaining bond. Separations from Marina, then feverish reconciliations. The interventions of their few friends, first in the Russian-speaking community of Fort Worth and Dallas (who, for example, paid for Marina's dental work and once helped her leave Lee). And last, Mrs. Ruth Paine, who in suburban Irving sheltered Marina and her two daughters (the second born October 20, 1963, at Parkland Memorial Hospital) during the Oswalds' intermittent separations from April until November. Mrs. Paine was herself estranged from her leftist husband and, before Marina moved in, the two women often wrote loving letters. There were annoying interviews with the FBI, who were interested in the Oswalds' Russian connections, particularly midway in 1963, when Marina began writing (at Lee's request, she said) for visas to re-enter Russia and Lee went to New Orleans, then Mexico, apparently plumping for Castro and seeking permission to traverse Cuba on their way back to the U.S.S.R. And coloring all in Oswald, the day-to-dayness of bootless work, of reading Marxist texts and periodicals, of shifting from one rented quarters to another, with and without

*(continued on page 193)*

## END OF CAMELOT

(continued from page 142)

Marina as his marriage turned sweet and sour, of watching war movies on television, of penning letters—to the Soviet embassy pleading for a visa, or to the Communist Party pleading for utilization of his talents—and far from least, of thinking up other names for himself, of photographically fabricating identification for these names, maybe for a dark purpose, maybe to alleviate the incongruity he felt amid these circumstances.

Indeed, flipping through that calendar, Lee Harvey Oswald could have recalled only a few luminous times.

There was January 27, 1963, when, using the name A. J. Hidell, he put ten dollars down on a mail-order snub-nosed Smith & Wesson .38 revolver ("the equalizer," Texans used to call the revolver) from a Los Angeles firm. The pistol was paid off in March.

There was March 12, 1963, when, as A. Hidell, he ordered for \$19.95 a Model 91/38 Mannlicher-Carcano carbine (an Italian World War Two surplus weapon, this one numbered C2766) and an Ordnance Optics Japanese-made four-power scope to be shipped to P.O. Box 2915, Dallas, Texas. Oswald did not order an M-1 advertised on the same page of the *American Rifleman* by Klein's Sporting Goods of Chicago, despite his familiarity with the weapon, perhaps because the M-1 cost \$78.88 and his mother had tintured him forever with frugality.

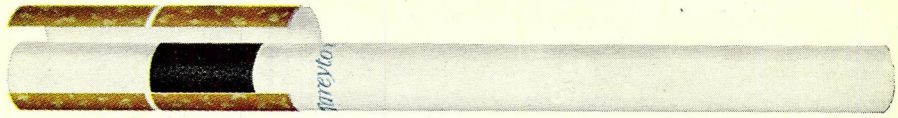
There were the days after March 20, when the weapons were shipped, that Lee, his wife said, sat alone with the rifle and practiced working the bolt, for hunting, he told her. She says she took two pictures of him, posed with rifle, revolver and copies of *The Worker* and *The Militant*.

There was April 10, when, Marina reported, Lee took his rifle from a concealed place near General Walker's home and fired a shot through a window at the general, who seemed to Oswald like Hitler and, therefore, fair big game.

There were those occasional days in New Orleans, from late April to September, when he and Marina seemed reconciled, when he became obsessed with Cuba, when, after first seeking out anti-Castro men, he formed under aliases a chapter of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, himself sole member, and passed out leaflets, and got arrested, and was celebrated in the papers, on radio and TV, became a media man.

There was his trip to Mexico City, from September 25 to October 3, when he called on the Soviet and Cuban delegations for visas to Russia via Cuba, but was rejected, in effect sentenced to the United States, to his renewed marital difficulties, to rage at the latest FBI interrogation of Marina, and to the needs of

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his child and soon-to-be-born daughter. Kindly Ruth Paine led him to the job at the Texas School Book Depository. After another marital scrap, he went to that job the morning of November 22 carrying a heavy brown-paper package. He told fellow employee Buell Wesley Frazier (a neighbor of the Paines), who would drive him there, that it contained curtain rods for his hermetic rented room in Dallas' Oak Cliff section.

In their rented rooms, John and Jackie Kennedy prepared for a big day. Yesterday had been sweet but exhausting. First the Washington departure, then the constant business on Air Force One (for instance, keeping up with the progress of the six Cabinet members flying to the Far East for wide-ranging discussions with our allies, including South Vietnam), the roaring welcome in San Antonio, where the crowds screamed "Jackieeee" and made the President smile, the hop to Houston for more adulation and a perfunctory dinner speech and, throughout, the strain among Yarborough, Connally and Johnson, but ending at last with the flight to Fort Worth and its rainy-night welcome and the aging Hotel Texas. Friday, predictable as wind-up dolls, Jack would say a few words to the blue-collar faithful who'd assembled outside the hotel, and they'd have this chamber of commerce breakfast, and then leap the few miles to Dallas for the motorcade, the speech, the flight to Austin, to Lyndon's ranch and by then they would be at the end of things, at the close of this November 22. Jackie chose a pink wool suit with a navy collar, a matching pillbox hat and short white gloves for the day.

The morning counted down. After the breakfast (such a triumph for Jackie it caused one reporter to ask J.F.K.'s assistant David Powers, "When are you going to have her come out of a cake?"), the Kennedys enjoyed that rarity of political trips, an unscheduled period. The President surveyed the Dallas *News*. Stories about the Texas Democratic rift. A quote from Nixon, just then airborne from Dallas to New York, predicting that J.F.K. would drop L.B.J. from the 1964 ticket. And an ad, signed by the American Fact-Finding Committee (Bernard Weissman, chairman), that pilloried Kennedy for abrogating the Constitution, for substituting the "Spirit of Moscow" for the Monroe Doctrine and, in general, for leading the country to socialist ruin; to wit, allowing his brother "Bobby, the Attorney General, to go soft on Communists, fellow travelers and ultra leftists in America while permitting him to persecute loyal Americans." Seemingly, that last meant people like Jimmy Hoffa, awaiting trial on charges of jury tampering. The President explained to Jackie, "Oh, you know, we're heading into nut country today," and

added in free association, "You know, last night would have been a hell of a night to assassinate a President."

Two hours later, SS 100 X made the turn, slowly, ponderously, from Main onto Houston, approaching the Depository, and the President waved at the Dallasites. The weather had cleared (the temperature was up to 68 degrees—"Kennedy weather," his aides called it) and the bubble top was off. Behind the car was Love Field, the encouraging welcome there ("Jackieeee," they called, and the President shook hands by the fence), and the unprecedented fervor along the route. "You sure can't say Dallas doesn't love you, Mr. President," chirruped Mrs. Connally from Kennedy's left front, next to her husband on the jump seats. "No, you can't," John Kennedy replied. No one could. As politics, the trip was working. The crowds along the route had grown bigger and more friendly. At one place, the President had ordered his driver, William Greer, to stop so he could get out and greet school children. The Secret Service agents winced. But the President stopped a second time to talk with some nuns. A priest, Father Oscar Huber, had hurried to see him, waved madly and thought the President responded. Almost everyone believed the waves, the smiles of John and Jackie were especially for them. The motorcade reached the commercial heart of Dallas by 12:20, proceeding in designated order: three motorcycle cops; a pilot car; more motorcycle police; a white Ford lead car with Chief Curry, agents Lawson and Sorrels and Sheriff Bill Decker in it; then SS 100 X with Greer driving and Roy Kellerman, chief of J.F.K.'s guards, beside him, and behind them the Connallys and, in the rear seat, the Kennedys—two motorcycles flanked each side of the limousine's trunk; next came the Cadillac convertible backup car, crammed with Secret Service men, four more riding the running boards, all armed, one with an AR-15 automatic rifle that was disturbingly close to Presidential aides Powers and Kenneth O'Donnell, who perched on the jump seats; behind them the Vice-President's rented convertible, with L.B.J. and Senator Yarborough and the Secret Service detail headed by Rufus Youngblood; and behind them L.B.J.'s backup car; and behind that the Dallas mayor's car; and then the first press car, the "pool car," carrying Assistant Press Secretary Mac Kilduff on the right, with Merriam Smith, U.P.I.'s dean of White House correspondents, facing the radiotelephone in the center of the dashboard, and an A.P. reporter, a Dallas *News* reporter and an ABC correspondent riding in back. Trailing afterward were the photographers' car, the vehicles of lesser dignitaries, the V.I.P. bus and assorted extras in the motorcade's placid progress.

Down Main Street they'd come. The

excited cries and squeals as the motorcyclists swept past . . . "The President . . . he's coming . . . Jackie, she's with him . . . the President . . . here he comes. . . ." And there he was, passing the faces, the mouths open to cheer, waving as he came. Past the windows of H. L. Hunt, who looked down from his high office on the President. Past FBI agent James Hosty, who'd wanted a glimpse of the Boss and whose burdensome case load included a couple named Oswald. Nearby, at the Dallas *News*, a short, paunchy man born Jacob Rubenstein but now named Jack Ruby sat discussing the ads for his night clubs, oblivious to the President slipping by below. Past the enthusiastic mobs on Main Street, the obvious dangers there, all the Secret Service necks craning up and around like spaceship antennas, scanning windows and faces until the Lincoln reached the right turn onto Houston, with the lead car just now turning off Houston onto Elm, the crowds sparser here, some tension gone, spread out, and the motorcycles at slow speed, their cylinders popping like firecrackers among the cheers, while the young President and his wife wave and SS 100 X makes its languorous turn onto Elm by the Depository into the zoom lens of a Bell & Howell movie camera held by a New York garment manufacturer as out of place in his adopted Dallas as John Kennedy. Abraham Zapruder held the camera steady on the limousine to film his President and so filmed his President's murder.

It wasn't a difficult shot. Thousands of tourists have eye-measured the distance from the southeast sixth-floor window of the Texas School Book Depository to the spot on the pavement, about the fourth road stripe down from the corner, just past a live oak tree fronting the Depository, where the Lincoln was when the President was first hit. Thousands have looked up as did Howard Brennan and Amos Lee Euins that day in fear and expectation of seeing the gunman there, the one the Secret Service didn't see, the long rifle barrel barely visible outside the window, then disappearing. They look, and nod, and look again, and the Dallas cops watching mutter about the goddamned Yankees out there getting their tonsils sunburned. No, it wasn't a hard shot. About 190 feet when the limousine cleared the oak tree and came into the scope.

Right then, if you were somebody who liked technical things, guns and electronics, say, you would have thought it all out, or had it stored in memory cells ready for use. You'd know that at 190 feet (or 63 yards), the four-power cross hairs made the target appear only about 50 feet away—a mere 17 yards, nothing compared with the 100-plus-yard ranges over iron sights used for rapid-fire training in the Marine Corps. You might

know, with a quick rabbitlike intelligence, lots of technical things. That the Mannlicher-Carcano was accurate at short range. That the Italian NATO rifle team still used the carbine for meets. It was called "humanitarian" not because, as its critics later said, it missed, but because it put slugs where you wanted them, either to wound or to kill. Small slugs, 6.5mm, about a quarter of an inch, a little bigger than a .22, traveling, if the charge was fresh, at about 2200 feet per second at 100 yards. Not extremely fast, not slow, either. If the round wasn't fresh, the velocity could be less. The slug would tend to wobble or "go to sleep" within the first 100 yards, a tumbling that would be exaggerated if the slug hit anything. The slugs themselves could vary. Steel-jacketed, or "solid," with round noses, they'd blow through things leaving a nice clean hole. Copper-jacketed (lead thinly coated with copper), the round-nosed bullets were capricious. If they hit something hard, they'd likely deform. If something soft was encountered, they'd

pass on through, their velocity decreasing, especially if the velocity was low to begin with, and probably start to tumble end over end and do strange things. Any policeman could tell you stories about bullets. Like about the .38 the would-be suicide fired against his right temple that entered the skin, glanced off the skull and tumbled around the forehead beneath the skin, finally ripping out over his left ear, leaving him dazed and life-loving.

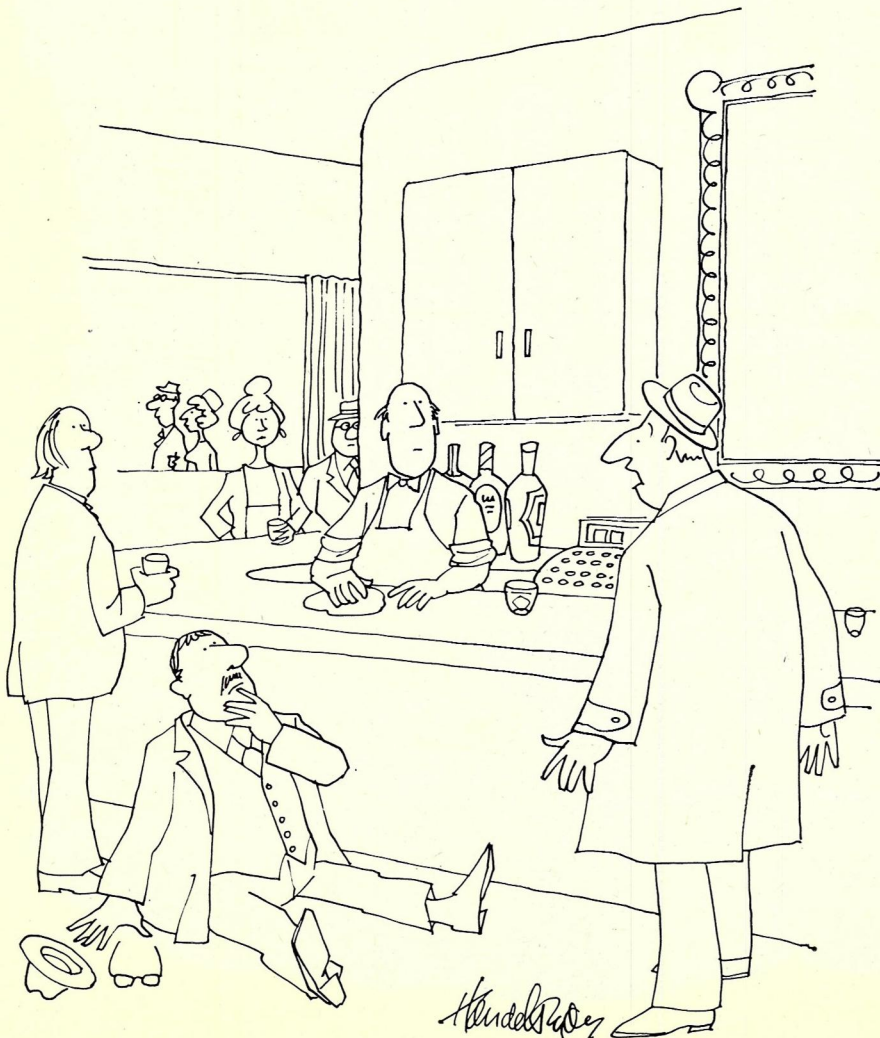
All the rounds for this Mannlicher-Carcano had roundnosed, copper-jacketed bullets weighing between 160-161 grains. One was in the chamber as the target came into view. At least two more live ones lay in the magazine, probably in a clip, though they could, if you were sloppy or rushed, just be jammed in the magazine and forced up by the follower spring. A third might have been in the magazine, since three cartridge cases and one live round were later found. Or, if you believe only two shots were fired, one expended round might have been in the rifle's chamber when the shooter took

the weapon out of the brown-paper bag and assembled it. If that hull was left there carelessly it could have been the one shucked out, to be found with a dent on the neck that held the slug, the sort of flaw you get loading an expended cartridge case to practice dry firing and bolt manipulation. But you can dent a live round, too, not using a clip, so the spring forces the round up at the wrong angle before the bolt pushes the round into the chamber. If that round was live and dented in the chambering process, the dent might well cause the projectile to tumble from the start, doing odd things to whatever it hit, as a certain bullet in this instance was said to do. Anyway, the rifleman had at least three live rounds. Or he could have had four. Whichever, the first now lay awaiting its moment.

It came as the Hertz clock blinked 12:30 C.S.T. It came with the cross hairs low and a bit left. The cheap scope, unmatched to the rifle, threw the aiming point high and right. Any trained marksman experienced with that rifle would adjust for the error, a maximum of five inches high, three right at this range. The shooter would hold his sight picture down, too, because he was taught that with any target below and going away, the tendency was to shoot too high. The limousine's speed—only 11.2 miles per hour as later calculated—was no obstacle—the picture stayed the same and there wasn't much traversing to do. The pavement's slight declination toward the underpass would help the shooter, if anything, the limousine's downhill progress correcting a high shot. All that was needed now was a good "weld" of right-hand thumb to check, a short "sipping" breath, hold it, and then squeeze, so gently the explosion startled even the rifleman.

Witnesses likened the first report to a firecracker. Many thought it was backfiring from the motorcycles. But the sudden, sharp *pop!* announced the Mannlicher-Carcano's slug, slamming low and a trifle right into the President's nether neck, so that his right arm, raised to wave, suddenly cramps talonlike and, joined by his left, claws for his throat. In Zapruder's film, as the Lincoln glides from behind an obstructing street sign, we see in the distortions of two planes and camera speed, his agonized movement and, in our agony of attention, Kennedy's movements are so slow to us, it seems we ought to see everything.

See behind the President in the backup car, the Secret Service men scowling at the noise, poised but uncertain, some looking backward, while the motorcycle outriders peer at the President, and Howard Brennan, a 44-year-old steamfitter, come to see his President, and Amos Lee Euins, a 15-year-old black schoolboy, look up from across Elm at the sixth-floor southeast window, a floor above and to the right



*"Do I look like a person who knocks people down for no reason? That was a cry for help."*

of three black people watching the procession from the Depository, and think they see the rifle and the shooter, preparing for the last shots.

We could see John Connally, holding his Stetson, turn quizzically to his left, then jerk back right in the start of a slump, while his mouth opens, cheeks puff, hair flies, as something hits him while the President behind him begins sliding leftward toward his puzzled wife, a leftward slide oddly stiff, until you remember he is wearing a surgical corset for his chronic bad back, and an Ace bandage twisted in a figure eight over his hips, so that he is propped upright like a shooting-gallery silhouette.

*That was good, he's hit, now the bolt up, back, forward, down, good, smooth and quick, just track a little right, up a bit, there, hold . . . squeeze . . . Christ, where did it go?*

We could see the crowd's faces change from enthusiasm to confusion to fear, their cheers to screams, their hands from applause to grotesque stop motion, as another shot seems to sound, this one shattering, maybe on the roadway or curb, a fragment hitting James Tague, who stands 270 feet away, near the underpass—and although later it can't be proved that this shot missed (or even was fired, though 83 percent of the witnesses reported three shots), people throw themselves down for cover, except the

dumfounded or a peculiar man with an umbrella or those in buildings, like the blacks in the Depository, one of whom thinks he hears after the shot the tinkle of the cartridge cases on the floor above them.

We could watch the cops look up and around, see Roy Kellerman in SS 100 X twisting in wonder and driver William Greer owl-eyeing the road, and Clint Hill lurching off the back-up car and running for the Lincoln, while Dave Powers and Ken O'Donnell see the President falling toward Jackie, and, at the same time in L.B.J.'s convertible, Special Agent Rufus Youngblood is turning to the Vice-President, pushing him down.

*Bolt it again, move that picture up, that one looked low, there! Hold it there on the head, a little left with the cross hairs . . . now, squeeze . . .*

Lastly, near the end of our time we could concentrate on Mrs. Kennedy. She is staring doe-eyed at her husband, knowing he is hurt, reaching for him, unconscious of John Connally's moaning "Oh, no, no, no," from the jump seat. of the crowd's shrieking disintegration, of Clint Hill rushing toward her, of everything except this hurt in Jack's throat. There is now no consideration of the heat, of cloying Texans, of fatigue, no recollection in sorrow or joy of her living children, of her poor dead baby

Patrick buried in August, of Jack's wounding love affairs, of their poignant anniversary just two months ago, of her own flights for rest and succor to the Greek islands, not even of what a triumph she, the First Lady, has been on this journey, how much for all his charm, in the end he *needed* her. There is only the hurt, and her hand on his elbow, and the confused image of the tanned face contorted, and then there is no more time.

It is Zapruder frame number 313. The Mannlicher-Carcano slug, high and right again, hits, fragments, blows a fist-sized hole in the upper-right side of John Fitzgerald Kennedy's head, and he is dead, at the speed of light, of brain neurons disconnected.

Nellie Connally described it as "like spent buckshot falling all over us, and then, of course, I could see that it was matter, brain tissue." Dave Powers said it "took off the top of the President's head, and had the sickening sound of a grapefruit splattering against the side of a wall." The rain of blood, tissue, bone shards fell on both sides of the limousine. It splattered motorcycle patrolmen Bobby W. Hargis, and B. J. Martin to the left rear of the Lincoln, and dotted spectators beside and right of the car, and the Connallys, Greer, Roy Kellerman in front of the stricken President. Such facts were to be important in the

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future appraisal of the murder.

In the back seat, the only fact was the horror, the great gouts of blood John Kennedy's heart pushed out through his skull and onto his widow's dress, her stockings and gloves, across the red roses she'd been given at Love Field (Texas had run out of yellow roses for her). And suddenly Jackie is on the trunk of the Lincoln, probably in shock, scrambling after a fish-belly-white piece of her husband's skull that's skittering across the polished black surface, as though she could catch it and Band-Aid it back as with a scratched child. Or perhaps she was terrified and escaping to Clint Hill, who now has made it to SS 100 X, has grasped one of the welded handholds and is pulling himself up against the belated acceleration of the Lincoln as Greer finally reacts and Kellerman barks into his mike, "We are hit. Get us to a hospital." Hill struggles up and pushes Jackie into the seat and looks at Lancer, his Boss, and as the car screams away for Parkland Memorial Hospital, he hammers his fist on the trunk in rage and frustration and loss.

It has taken six seconds. It's now 12:30:06 C.S.T. Panicked pigeons rise from the Depository's roof and see madness below. Officer Hargis rams a curb, flips off and charges with drawn pistol up an incline toward the grassy knoll, pergola and stockade fence west of the Depository. Faces turn toward the Depository. Abraham Zapruder, who has filmed the Lincoln until it went beneath the underpass, is screaming, "They killed him, they killed him!"

In the press "pool car," Merriman Smith has the radiotelephone. He shouts to the U.P.I. operator, "Three shots were fired at President Kennedy's motorcade in downtown Dallas." He will hold onto the phone, onto his greatest coup, keeping it from the A.P. reporter for crucial minutes, but that is not important. Nor is the fact that soon after U.P.I. came ABC Radio, then CBS's Cronkite interrupting, fittingly, *As the World Turns*, or last, the favorite, NBC's Huntley and Brinkley. What is important is that, within 15 minutes after the event, most of us knew the President had been shot, and that, henceforth, the events would be as much what the media reported as what had happened. That fact will haunt all the murder's investigators. Smith's "three shots," for example. Though most people in the acoustical nightmare of Dealey Plaza reported three shots, some said four or five, even six. Mrs. Kennedy, Clint Hill, Zapruder reported only two, and the third bullet has been impossible to identify. Thus, in the reports that followed from the separate worlds of Dallas and Washington, of investigation and grief, we should have acknowledged that no picture, however conscientiously projected, was complete or accurate.

We were all like the audience in a

Nevada movie theater, whose manager brought up the lights and announced that the President, Vice-President, governor of Texas and a Secret Service man had been murdered in Dallas and "We will now continue with our matinee feature." Except the feature *was* the murder of President John F. Kennedy and the reels were crazily playing at once facts and rumors, and resonances of both.

At Dealey Plaza, amid the confusion, motorcycle officer Marrion L. Baker looks up, dismounts and runs into the Depository, convinced the sniper is on its roof. He encounters Superintendent Roy Truly and asks which way is up. Using the stairway, because the elevators are somewhere above, the two men arrive at the second-floor landing 90 seconds after the first shot, in time to see Lee Harvey Oswald hurrying into the lunchroom. Drawing his revolver, Baker summons Oswald, and asks Truly, "Do you know this man, does he work here?" Truly assures the cop Oswald is an employee, and he and Baker continue upstairs to the roof. Oswald, many believe, then buys a Coke, walks downstairs and exits the Depository at 12:33, leaving behind him the Mannlicher-Carcano, complete with a live chambered round, stuffed between two rows of boxes, the three spent cartridge cases, the brown-paper bag, his palm prints and a tuft of fibers from his shirt wedged in the metal butt plate of the carbine. He walks east on Elm Street, will walk for seven blocks and by 12:40 will board a bus but, taking a transfer (so thriftily), will soon leave it in the unusual traffic and ride a cab from the Greyhound bus station to Oak Cliff near his rented room. He'll walk to his room, too. By 1:03, he will leave, carrying his revolver in his waistband.

In that time at the Plaza, some order begins to come out of the chaos. The Dallas police—all the Secret Service are with the motorcade, racing toward Parkland—have begun questioning witnesses. Eventually, over 190 Plaza spectators will testify, offering various ear- and eye-witness reports: of the number of shots; of men running out of the Depository, down the street or into station wagons; of smoke—gun smoke?—from sewers and from behind fences; of shots from the grassy knoll, other buildings, the railing above the underpass. But the consensus at 12:34 is, as the Dallas police radio log shows, the Depository (but, queerly, one of the two police radio channels is garbled—in the melee, a mike button is stuck, or, as critics say later, somebody is intentionally jamming those wave lengths). At 12:35, Howard Brennan tells what he saw. At 12:36, Sergeant D. V. Harkness speaks with Amos Lee Euins. The schoolboy tells about the man in the window. The Depository is ordered sealed. At 12:44, 14 minutes after the

shots were fired, a bulletin is broadcast: "Attention all squads, the suspect in the shooting at Elm and Houston is reported to be an unknown white male, approximately thirty, slender build, height five feet, six, weight one hundred sixty-five pounds. . . ." In his car, Officer J. D. Tippit hears the call and, soon after, the order to patrol the Oak Cliff section.

At Parkland Memorial Hospital, Jackie stands watching the hopeless attempts to resuscitate her husband. She knows. On the way, Clint Hill had heard her cry, "He's dead, they've killed him—oh, Jack, oh, Jack, I love you." He recalled how she hesitated to leave the gory SS 100 X until Hill's coat was draped over the President's exploded head. Then there'd been the run with the stretcher (God! Her roses were on his chest!) into Trauma Room Number One, in this dun-colored tailings-heap complex called Parkland Memorial Hospital. There, for the next 90 minutes, nothing made sense.

In the gray-tile sterility of the trauma room, the doctors looked at the body of the President. They see a white male patient, number 24740, gunshot wound, who is lean, tanned, 170 pounds, six feet, aged 46, back-braced and doomed. They try fluids and external cardiac massage and perform a tracheotomy by enlarging a wound at the base of his throat, but they, too, know it is useless. No one could live with so massive a head wound. Dr. Malcolm Perry—the surgeon who was soon to raise suspicion by telling reporters the throat wound could have been an entrance hole—ends the cardiac massage at one P.M. C.S.T. and, as a matter of record, Dr. William Kemp Clark pronounces the President dead. Lancer is unhorsed, and Camelot is finished. Jackie Kennedy kneels in the blood, the debris, on the floor, and trembles in anguish, in prayer, but does not cry.

In a nearby room, sequestered by the Secret Service, paces the 36th President of the United States. He is shocked and fearful to realize that 35 minutes ago he could not even sway events in his native state—now he is the leader of the world's most powerful country. He knows that thought is in many minds, twinned if you were a Kennedyite, with the odious but irrepressible feeling that this man Johnson (this Texan!) was a usurper. His words of condolence seem awkward to him. His wife tells Mrs. Kennedy, "I wish to God there was something I could do." For the Johnsons, however, there is nothing to be done, except what the Secret Service suggests. The agents, those who have not, out of loyalty or irrationality, stayed with the slain President, fear a plot, maybe even a coup. What better time than with the Vice-President in Dallas, too, and most of the Cabinet out of the country? Rufus Youngblood tells the new President they must go at once to the security of Air Force One and then as



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quickly as possible to Washington. L.B.J. agrees reluctantly, saying, "We don't know whether it's a Communist conspiracy or not." The President orders word of J.F.K.'s death withheld until they leave.

At the same time, the Secret Service and police have sealed the emergency area of Parkland Hospital, including the trauma rooms, where Kennedy lies dead and Connally wounded (the governor soon is taken for emergency surgery). The nurse's station serves as a command center. Telephone links are made with the White House communications agency in Washington, and through it, with the world. Jack Kennedy's Gaelic brigade—O'Donnell, Powers, Lawrence O'Brien—try to do what must be done to comfort Jackie, to arrange matters for their dead chieftain. Secret Service men and military aides seek to impose order, calling key officials. They worry that L.B.J. doesn't know the code keys that will implement various defensive reactions, those carried around in the metal suitcase by a President's shadow—the "bagman," whose various packets contain codes to set up hotlines to world leaders or to implement nuclear attacks of several magnitudes. This "man with the satchel," Ira Gearhart, had been separated from both J.F.K. and L.B.J. for some time in the strung-out chase to Parkland. He was with L.B.J. now, but L.B.J. hadn't been briefed. Suppose the assassination signaled an attack? In Washington, Secretary of Defense McNamara had placed U. S. bases on alert as soon as he heard of the shooting. The Cabinet plane, bearing Secretaries Rusk, Freeman, Dillon, Hodges, Wirtz and Udall, was contacted (they have turned back after confirming U.P.I. reports).

Soon after his brother arrives at Parkland, Attorney General Robert Kennedy is reached at his home in Virginia by J. Edgar Hoover. Steely-pale, Bobby then telephones his mother, Rose. The chilling word goes throughout the Kennedy family in Massachusetts (except to the patriarch Joseph P. Kennedy—the news is kept from him for fear of his health, to the extent that his son Teddy, arriving later that afternoon from Washington, rips out the wires of his father's TV set). When in a few moments Bobby will learn from Dallas of Jack's death, he will say, "He had the most wonderful life," and turn to the ordeal of organized grief.

Outside Parkland's secure area, reporters throng and speculate (including one, Seth Kantor, who will claim he saw Jack Ruby). The A.P. reporter issues a bulletin that L.B.J. and a Secret Service man have been shot. Rumors mixed with facts multiply, divide and conquer the nation's attentions. In the Senate of the United States, Edward M. Kennedy learns of his brother's wound from a wire-service ticker. Richard Nixon hears

of it from a New York cabbie. Sargent Shriver, who will plan much of the funeral, learns by telephone at lunch. They all want to know what's really going on, want to know that:

- At 12:57, Father Oscar Huber (who had waved at John Kennedy 45 minutes earlier) and Father James Thompson arrive at the hospital. In the trauma room, Huber administers the last rites to the President (outside, reporters whisper, "It looks like he's gone. They've called a priest"). Father Huber assures Mrs. Kennedy that Jack's soul was still in his body, that the rite was effective. The widow thanks him. Outside again, Huber answers reporters' questions, hinting the President is dead.

- At 1:26, President Johnson, his wife, Chief Curry and the Secret Service detail break out of Parkland, that possible trap, and race to Love Field and Air Force One. They arrive seven minutes later.

- At 1:30, a Dallas undertaker named Vernon Oneal arrives in response to Clint Hill's behest with his best bronze casket (a Britannia model, eventually billed to the Kennedys at \$3995). Jackie has said, "I'm not going to leave here without Jack," and so John Kennedy's body is swaddled in plastic, his ruined head wrapped and cushioned with rubber bags until, mummylike, he is closed in his coffin. On his finger is Jackie's wedding ring, put there to keep him company on the last flight home.

- At 1:33, Assistant Press Secretary Mac Kilduff announces that the President of the United States is dead. In hysterical bulletins, the confirmation is flashed around the world. Reactions of all kinds come. Fidel Castro says, "Everything has changed," and today we wonder what, exactly, he meant. A high school student in Amarillo shouts, "Hey, great, J.F.K.'s croaked!" A retired Marine Corps general in Washington, unwittingly echoing some Southerners after Lincoln: "It was the hand of God that pulled the trigger that killed Kennedy." But those sentiments were exceptional. Mostly, America is stunned, grieving and worrying. The *Times* reports New York is like a vast church. Weeping is widespread. Every eye and ear is turned to television or radio. There is rage, too, of course. In the White House, where mourning now must intertwine with planning for a funeral and transition, a friend and advisor speaks for many: "I'd like to take a fucking bomb and blow the fucking state of Texas off the fucking map." That was before the last maddening Texas events occurred.

First came the battle of the body. With the dead President encased, his widow, his guards, his aides, all want to leave this place of death, leave with the awful sacks of personal effects needed for evidence. Secret Service agent Richard Johnson wants to get to the FBI with

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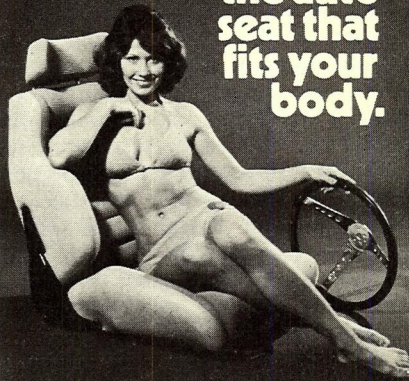
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this nearly perfect 6.5mm bullet found on a stretcher, probably Connally's, by a Parkland employee and passed on to Johnson by the hospital's security chief. That could (and would) be terribly important in a hypothesis later based on that unusual bullet. They all need to leave. But Dr. Earl Rose, the Dallas County medical examiner, says they cannot leave. Under Texas statute, any homicide victim must undergo an autopsy, so that the rights of the accused murderer are protected, and they cannot leave until that is done (in retrospect, as we will see, perhaps the law should have been obeyed). Dr. Rose blocks the emergency-area doorway, backed by a justice of the peace. The President's physician, Admiral George Burkley exclaims, "It's the President of the United States!" Dr. Rose retorts, "You people from Washington can't make your own law." And so, in death, John Kennedy is the object of a struggle emblematic of that which, in life, he came to Texas to resolve. This one Ken O'Donnell resolves. "It's just another homicide case as far as I'm concerned," the J.P., Judge Theron Ward, opines. "Go fuck yourself," says Ken. "We're leaving." And they sweep through, led by an angry Secret Service detail. Surrounding Jackie and the casket, they brush aside a strange priest, who's waving a green bag containing a relic of the true Cross (he's blessing the President). They muscle the heavy Britannia into Vernon Oneal's hearse, and then the cars peel off for Love Field. On Air Force One, the Kennedyites will find the Texans, and a terrible delay (what if those bastards impound the body?), while L.B.J. waits for Judge Sarah Hughes to swear him in (unnecessary, since he'd actually been in power since John Kennedy was hit). Factionalism will fester there, while Jackie Kennedy sits in the rear of the plane by her husband's coffin, refusing to change from her bloody clothes, and the Irish Mafia kneel to speak with her, wondering when in hell they'll take off, and admiring her preternatural lucidity, while Texas accents sound faintly from the forward cabin. People will eat vegetable soup and drink whiskey, which doesn't affect them and be unaware of the other Texas thing happening out there in Dallas.

Around 1:03 P.M., just after the President was pronounced dead, Roy Truly has informed police and agent Sorrels that in his canvass of employees he's discovered Oswald, the same man who was in the lunchroom just after the shooting, is missing. Maybe he should be questioned. Meanwhile, the physical evidence is examined (by 1:22, the rifle mistakenly described at first as a Mauser will be found). Just then, Oswald is walking away from his rooming house (strange, his housekeeper later said, she thought a police car came and honked, and then there was her tenant "O. H. Lee" on the street at a bus stop). He wears a light shirt, light

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jacket, dark slacks and his .38 Smith & Wesson Special—the cylinder may, like the rifle, have one expended round in it and the bullets are standard .38 Specials, slightly small for the .38 Smith & Wesson Special, which has an odd-sized barrel diameter, a detail that would make slug identification difficult. At 1:15, less than a mile from the rooming house, Officer J. D. Tippit sees Oswald, who matches the radioed description of the Dealey Plaza suspect. What happens next is verified finally by nine witnesses, including William Scoggins and Helen Markham, who see the first act. They see Tippit's car roll up from behind the young man and stop next to him. The pedestrian goes to the right door, and the cop opens the driver's side and steps out, starting around the front of the car. As before, earwitness accounts of the number of shots differ. But the young, slight, dark-haired man soon identified as Oswald did, Tippit's autopsy showed, put four rounds into the cop. One drove a uniform button into his chest, another nicked the aorta, a third penetrated his torso and the fourth ripped into the falling policeman's temple. Then the killer runs for several blocks. He empties four cartridge cases in some bushes as people watch. He jogs past a used-car lot, discards a jacket. Behind him, a witness is calling in the murder on Tippit's radio. Immediately, sirens rend the Oak Cliff quiet. The Dallas police have had enough. A shoe-store manager named Johnny Brewer, on West Jefferson Boulevard, watches a young man duck into his doorway until a prowler passes, then walk quickly into the Texas Theater (Tony Russell, starring in *War Is Hell*). Brewer later said, "He looked funny to me . . . like he had been running, and he looked scared." Brewer asks the ticket seller about the man and learns he didn't pay, and the ticket seller, like Brewer, thinks about the assassination and the sirens and calls the police.

At 1:45, while at Parkland the battle of the body rages, the Dallas police—15 strong—fan through the theater, fingerprinted by the flickering heroics, until Brewer points out Lee Harvey Oswald. Officer M. N. McDonald strides to Oswald, orders him to stand and begins a search. "Well, it's all over now," Oswald sighs and, hitting McDonald with his left hand, snatches for the revolver with his right. McDonald slugs the suspect, grapples for the gun, and the rest of the cops pile on. In minutes, Lee Harvey Oswald is handcuffed and on his way to police headquarters. He has a contusion on the right side of his forehead. He complains about police brutality, claims he knows nothing about Tippit, about the President, seems wise to his rights and canny (surely enough, police later think, for aliases, for knowing something of immigration and passport procedures). At headquarters, the homicide captain has meanwhile decided, based on the Deposi-

tory circumstances, to arrest this Lee Harvey Oswald in Irving. But Oswald's already there. His interrogation begins. Secret Service agent Sorrels is there and the FBI's James Hosty (who, according to a lieutenant in Dallas' intelligence section, has just confided that the FBI had information "that this subject was capable of committing the assassination of President Kennedy"—that assertion lies buried for years).

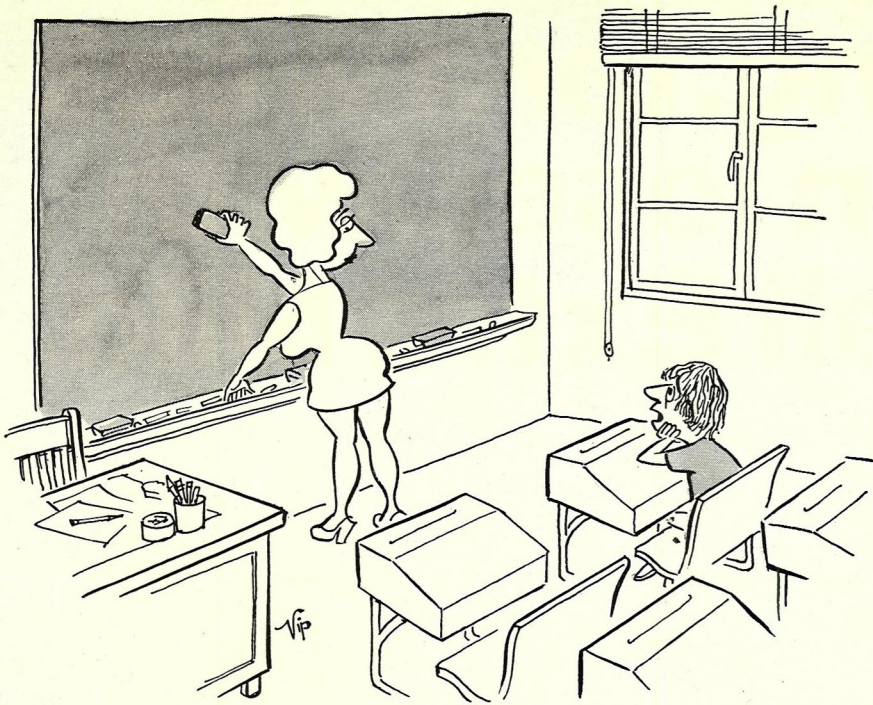
The networks identify the suspect at 3:23, and commentators immediately link Kennedy, Tippit and Oswald. In the hours to come, they'll have much more to report. Oswald will say, "Now, everyone will know me." He will be arraigned for Tippit's, then for the President's murder. He will try to reach a New York lawyer active in A.C.L.U. cases and fail. He will see his wife. And Marina will tell police she's found Lee's wedding ring in a cup at the Paines', where he'd left it early that Friday morning, along with almost all his money and, yes, they'd had another fight the night before. She'll know about the rifle in the Paines' garage and about the pictures of Lee and his guns, thus drawing tighter the lengthening chain of circumstantial and physical evidence around "A. Hidell." She'll intimate he seems guilty by the look in his eyes. His mother, Marguerite, hearing over the radio of her son's arrest, will call Bob Schieffer, then a Fort Worth reporter (now CBS White House reporter) and tell him she wants to sell her story of Lee. And, with plans already hatching for a lawyer (who'll turn out to be Mark Lane), she will join Marina in Dallas, their lodgings courtesy of *Life* magazine (which is also acquiring Abe Zapruder's film and to whom Marguerite will also say, "Boys, I'll give you a story for money.") Oswald will become the star of his own show, appearing before reporters to state his innocence ("I didn't kill anybody, no sir"), while his prosecutors prejudice the case by saying, as district attorney Henry Wade did, "I figure we have sufficient evidence to convict him." Indeed, just as a matter of law—ignoring the consequences—the case will become one of the most convoluted in American history, instanced at once by the discovery U. S. Attorney Barefoot Sanders made that no Federal law forbade assassinating a President. Thus, Lee Harvey Oswald, if guilty, was just a plain old Texas murderer.

All that will occur and all along Oswald seems to enjoy the game. Baiting the police, vouchsafing little, eating well and sleeping soundly. Happily for him, one supposes, he doesn't know he, too, is doomed. Jack Ruby has attended one of the press briefings. Jack is a police buff, with inferiority feelings born of failure. Adulation of guns and cuffs and power seem to alleviate those feelings and he is, on Friday and Saturday, cruising police headquarters, radio stations and

his clubs in alternating currents of funk and tawdry business enthusiasms, until—he will claim he is overcome with pity for the Kennedys. At 11:21, Sunday, November 24, Ruby gut-shoots Lee Harvey Oswald to death in the Dallas police-building basement with a nickel-plated .38, on live television, as the accused assassin is being led away for transfer to the county jail. That development, too (how did he get in? why? who is he?), will fester in the nation's wounds. The wounds that Jackie Kennedy, en route home on Air Force One (code-named Angel, appropriately enough) resolved would be bandaged in the ceremonies of the three days to follow. That time, from the departure at Love Field until John Kennedy was laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery on Monday, November 25, comes back to us as a series of vignettes, like figures on a frieze telling of an ancient tragedy.

There is Jackie Kennedy, on the airplane, vowing that America must realize what's happened. Another dress? "No, let them see what they've done." She said that often, stipulating with the plural pronoun that Lee Harvey Oswald for her was surely symbolic of the hatred that had killed her husband. That motivated her decision to take the bronze casket off publicly. "We'll go out the regular way," she said. "I want them to see what they have done." And she wanted it known that she had sat by her husband all the way to Andrews Air Force Base, that she at the end possessed him totally. "Suppose I hadn't been there with him?" she asked. There could be no answer, perhaps because it seemed irrelevant in the divided atmosphere of Air Force One, where the Kennedy faction felt deracinated by the Johnson people, by the new President, who was doing what he must: take over the Administration of the country. "The Government must go forward," he was to say.

Never was that division better demonstrated than in the next picture, the image that told us it had really happened. There at Andrews, we saw it through the camera's eye—the casket shoved into the lift, and Jackie and Bobby (who'd boarded the plane a moment earlier to comfort her) descending while the assembled dignitaries, shadowy figures beyond the floodlit airplane, watched or moved in hesitant strides to greet the survivors of Dallas, and a team of military men went forward to take the burden and put it into the ambulance. It was true. Jack Kennedy was in that thing. That was what we saw and remembered, not the new President who, his pride hurt, did not even emerge from what was now his flagship until after the Kennedys had left for Bethesda Hospital, not the tall man who mumbled something about needing our help and God's before the stations began playing the 100th recapitulation of the Kennedy



"Geez, Miss Campbell, I could sit here all day and watch you erase."

years. Yet that man was the President now. While Jack Kennedy went to the autopsy room, Johnson and the advisors would go by helicopter to the White House lawn, then to the Executive Office Building for meetings and briefings (and Caroline and John-John, unaware yet, had heard the helicopters earlier ferrying VIPs to meet Air Force One and had rushed to the windows, crying, "There they are. Mummy and Daddy are home. . . . Daddy's here!"—their nanny tells Caroline later).

The autopsy itself should, it seems now, have been the next picture, at least for those qualified. But because it was not pretty, Robert Kennedy asked that the autopsy photos not be unnecessarily disseminated. (The Warren Commission never saw them.) Thus, although Kennedy's body was X-rayed, photographed, probed, examined for hours, the results—as we shall see in detail in the second Kennedy installment—have been in dispute ever since, largely because: (a) there were discrepancies among the physicians' working notes, the FBI's initial autopsy report (written by laymen) and the doctors' final report, (b) based on the Kennedy autopsy and the time required to fire Oswald's carbine, an odd explanation had to be advanced for Connally's wounds—that a bullet (the one found on Parkland's stretcher) passed through Kennedy's neck and on through the governor's chest, and out, to fracture the Texan's wrist and end by wounding his thigh, and (c) rumors from Dallas—of

more than one gun, of plots, of front entrance wounds—circulated an air of skepticism around the official version. Yet the gross findings were clear then and are now. One wound about five-and-one-half inches below the bony point behind the right ear, and about the same distance from the right shoulder joint. This opening, although it was difficult to trace to its end, led between two strap muscles to the throat wound, apparently an exit for the slug, which continued on to Connally. Unfortunately, the exit had been obliterated by Dr. Perry's desperate tracheotomy in the resuscitation attempts. About the second wound, the fatal shot, there was little doubt. Inward-beveled bone, metal fragments driven forward (like the ball that killed Lincoln) into the orb of the right eye. Massive, downward-slanting cerebral damage. Each fact clearly indicative of a shot from above and behind.

But we saw only the revised autopsy report, not the pictures, and when the autopsy was done and the new casket arrived at Bethesda—a plain African-mahogany model to replace the Britannia, damaged in the escape from Dallas—embalmers went to work to create the beautiful memory picture of the undertaker's trade. They dressed the body in a blue-gray suit, put mesh and artificial hair over the awful wound, brought color to the ashen flesh. They put a rosary in the folded hands. Jackie Kennedy would not like it, would say, "It was like something you would see at Madame Tus-

saud's," and so the casket would stay closed for the obsequies. That, like everything else, caused speculation. Is he disfigured? Shot in the face? Is he really dead, or a vegetable someplace? But it was Jackie's will, as so much was, and it was consistent with her decision, reached at Bethesda, that John Fitzgerald Kennedy's funeral would be like Abraham Lincoln's. It was.

At 4:34 A.M., Washington time, Saturday, November 23, the dead President went at last back to the White House. The dawn promised and would deliver a rainy, blowy, maudlin day. A Marine honor guard escorted the widow, still in the same pink, blood-covered suit, and the dead Commander-in-Chief's brother, and the flag-draped coffin to the East Room, where Kennedy would lie that morning, surrounded by the deathwatch sentinels, by four tall tapers, by the windows garlanded with black crepe, stark against even a lowering sky. Outside, thousands gathered to stare in silence at the White House and the black windows. Inside, Jackie looked again at her husband and murmured, "It isn't Jack."

The world knew it was. Westminster Abbey's bell tolled each minute, as it had done only for fallen monarchs. De Gaulle mused, "I am stunned. They are crying all over France." Italians marched in mourning. In Berlin, where Kennedy had announced, "*Ich bin ein Berliner*," candles lit every window. The U.S.S.R.'s Andrei Gromyko wept. The world leaders came, some to visit the East Room, some as the President lay in state on Sunday in the Capitol's rotunda, all to walk on Monday behind the Kennedys, behind the caisson from the White House to St. Matthew's Cathedral, then to ride to Arlington for the burial. There were eight heads of state, ten prime ministers, most of the world's remaining royalty. Ninety-two nations sent delegations. Some 250,000 Americans came in person to file by Kennedy's body in their Capitol. One million flanked the route of the funeral cortege, the procession to Arlington. Countless millions watched it all on television. We saw, and saw repeatedly so that it became imprinted in us almost genetically, the last images of the Kennedy era.

The riderless horse, Black Jack, cavorting so that the saber, the boots reversed in their silver stirrups, jangled and flashed—it was as though he were possessed, or mounted by a presence only he could feel.

Those drums, accompanied by the 100-to-the-minute mourning pace of the military units, moving behind the caisson to the band's slowed dirge of *Hail to the Chief*, and to the melancholy skirl of the Black Watch pipers, on the way to the Capitol, to the cathedral, to Arlington.

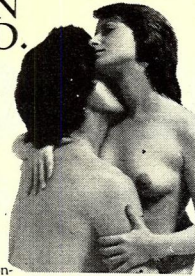
Cardinal Cushing, the high priest himself, breaking from Latin into English



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at the Mass to say, "May the angels, dear Jack, lead you into Paradise," and the veiled widow weeps, until Caroline says, "Don't cry, I'll take care of you."

The Arlington moment when, the last ritual words uttered in the echo of Air Force One's wing-wagging last fly-by, the bugler who's blown taps thousands of times reaches for the highest, ultimate note, and breaks, the sound like a catch in our throats, Jackie receives the covering flag. And then she stoops to light the flame that's to burn forever.

Finally, the midnight visit to the grave with Bobby, that Monday, after a small celebration of John-John's birthday, when she sees the tokens—a Special Forces beret, a prayer card—against the mass of odd flowers, against the flame, and she looks down, perhaps thinking of her letter to Jack, of her son's scrawl, and her daughter's note, and a pair of cuff links and a scrimshaw Presidential Seal that now rest with Jack beneath the ground, like him, against the coffin's silky lining where she'd put them. Then she looks up, turns to go—for the moment a secular saint. But one who will live another life, and return from it to mourn the murder of the brother-in-law so stern next to her. For them, it is not finished. For Jack Kennedy, it is.

Neither is it finished for us. Despite the feelings of the Kennedyites, the United States will go on. President Lyndon Baines Johnson has already met with the visiting diplomats and leaders, establishing himself. He has ordered the FBI to investigate his predecessor's murder vigorously. He must now prepare the budget, move into the Executive Mansion ("Where will I live?" Jackie had asked Bobby) and inaugurate his era. Vietnam's escalation is still in his future, but other killings lie close at hand. This man Ruby has killed Oswald, saying, "You killed the President, you rat," and then, "You all know me, I'm Jack Ruby." What's all that about? And there is Kennedy's killing. Who did it really? Things will have to be cleared up, for sure.

President Johnson's first impulse was to convene a Texas panel to look into these Texas matters. But the Justice Department, chiefly Nicholas Katzenbach, persuaded the President that this matter transcended state boundaries.

On November 29, 1963, by Executive Order Number 11130, President Johnson created the Warren Commission to investigate the murder of John F. Kennedy and Oswald. The commission's official charge was to arrive at the truth wherever it was to be found. But it was also understood that this panel of distinguished Americans—Chief Justice Earl Warren, Senators John Sherman Cooper and Richard Russell, Representatives Hale Boggs and Gerald R. Ford, ex-CIA

Director Allen W. Dulles, and the statesman John J. McCloy—would in its findings, if possible, preserve as a political necessity the respect for our institutions that was so vital in a period of transition and turmoil. The commission was also told to get it done fast. Unfortunately, the panel was insufficiently equipped for any of these tasks. Its members, perforce, were busy men unable to devote full time to the investigation (some attended as few as 20 percent of the hearings). It had no investigative staff, instead exclusively relying on the FBI (who had things to hide) and on a small group of young lawyers, who were being pushed constantly to investigate and to write the report as soon as possible. Even so, the commission amassed information unparalleled in any investigation of any of our assassinations.

On September 24, 1964, the Warren Commission submitted its report to the President. In painstaking detail through millions of words, it laid out its proof that Lee Harvey Oswald and Lee Harvey Oswald alone had murdered John F. Kennedy. It described how he had done it. It assessed Jack Ruby as a disturbed man, a crazed avenging angel, who had acted alone. It recommended that killing a President be made a Federal crime. It criticized the FBI's handling of crucial information and witnesses. Overall, it sought to dispel the myths, the theories (many voiced in Europe) of conspiracy—executed by leftists or rightists or militarists or foreign operatives.

For a time, the report succeeded. Polls showed most Americans accepted the findings. It was endorsed editorially around the nation. *The New York Times*, as bellwether, wrote: "The Warren Commission report is a massive and moving document . . . it tells all that can now be learned about the deaths of the President and his assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald. No comparable event in history has ever received such an exhaustive and searching examination while all the facts were fresh and the witnesses available to testify. Those in this country and abroad who prefer devious explanations will cling to their theories of a sinister conspiracy. But those who can confront the truth with all its complexity and ironic force will recognize in the events in Dallas much that is symbolic of the irrationality of man's fate."

Within a year, those who preferred devious explanations and suspected sinister conspiracies would take the field, armed with evidence even the mountainous report could not dwarf. The report, they said, was symbolic of man's irrationality. This murder must out, they cried, and the nation heard them, as we shall see.

*This is the fourth in a series of articles on political assassination in America.*

