

By WILLIAM HAMILTON

AUSTIN (UPI) — Every day there's a reminder of that Friday in Dallas for John Connally.

When he takes a bath or changes clothes, he sees the scarred flesh where the rifle bullet ripped through his torso.

At meals, he reaches for a bowl with his right hand sometimes, but hurriedly changes to his left, flinching from a pain where the shot clipped his wrist.

And when the governor of Texas talks of the events of Nov. 22, 1963, when President Kennedy was murdered and Connally wounded, his normally handsome features cloud and his eyes become glazed and reddened.

HE REMEMBERS minute details from two years ago.

"The crowd was immense and spontaneous. I thought the President was in high good humor. About the time we arrived in Dallas the sun broke clear and it looked like it would be a perfectly beautiful day."

He rode in the sleek black limousine with his attractive wife, Idanell, and President and Mrs. Kennedy. Connally recalls faces from the cheering thousands lining the motorcade route and remembers, "We were all extremely exuberant about everything that had happened.

"We were looking forward to a great luncheon there in Dallas and to a big dinner in Austin that night. And then we turned to go down the Stemmons Freeway . . ."

Connally reviewed the assassination reluctantly in a special interview at his office in the state Capitol. He posed beside a picture of himself, President and Mrs. Kennedy and then-Vice President and Mrs. Johnson, taken the morning before the assassination at a breakfast in Fort Worth.

IT WAS A pleasant beginning to a tragic day. "The first inkling I had that anything was amiss was when I heard a sound that I thought was a shot," Connally said. "I tried to turn around to be in front of the President.

"I felt a hard impact, as if somebody had hit me in the back—a very hard blow with a closed fist, it felt like. The first time I knew I had been hit was when I saw blood all over my clothing.

"I said to Nellie, 'My God! They're going to kill us both!' She kept saying, 'Be still, be still. You're going to be all right.'"

"I remember hearing the third shot and knew that someone had been hit a fatal blow. There was blood all over me and the car." Then he lost consciousness.

Connally was hit by a single bullet which wounded his chest, leg and wrist. He was hospitalized for six weeks and wore a sling on the wrist for months.

NOW 48, the governor has recovered. After his much-publicized role in Dallas he won an easy second term last year and is a solid favorite for a third term in 1966.

His hair is much grayer, but otherwise the governor is healthy. He says his wounds provide daily memories of the assassination.

"I think about it almost constantly, almost every day. Every time I sit down to a meal I'm reminded of it. I can't properly use a fork with my right hand," said Connally.

"I try not to consciously think about it, but everytime I take a shower or go swimming, I see the scars . . ."

When Chancellor Ludwig Erhard of West Germany visited Texas in December 1963 he was honored with a 21-gun salute. Both the Governor and Mrs. Connally shivered at the sound of gunfire and Connally says it still shakes him.

BUT HE CONTINUES to hunt occasionally on his ranch near Floresville, in South Texas. "It's the unanticipated noises that unnerve us," he said.

"I don't personally like to relive it all. It should be relegated by now to the pages of history," said the governor. "I granted this interview because I felt I should, not because I wanted to."

The events, of Nov. 22, 1963, taught Connally two lessons, drilling them deeply into his mind. He said he was reassured by the smooth transition from one President to another in a time of crisis, but the steady operation of government machinery even though "we suffered a great shock, a great tragedy." He said it was a tribute to

the American form of government.

"Also, I have had proven to me in a rather forceful manner that time is fleeting," he added. "You never know at what moment you will be called."

HE IS MUCH closer to his wife and their children — John, 19, Sharon, 15, and Mark, 12—because of it all. "I try to spend much more time with them than I have in the past," he said.

Connally has lost touch with Mrs. Kennedy. They corresponded for a time, "but we have not heard from her recently. Our paths do not cross."

Nor has he visited the memorial built to honor the slain president.

"I have been by it, but I've never stopped and visited it. I don't anticipate that I will.

"Maybe I shall. I had great respect and admiration for President Kennedy, but I need nothing to remind me of my relations with him . . . and I don't need another reminder of the tragic occurrence."

THE RESENTMENT against Dallas, branded after the assassination as a "city of hate," is gone also, Connally said. It's a city where he has strong political and personal ties and he was quick to defend it against the charges.

"The anger that welled up inside people, that caused them to strike out in every direction, has almost, if not entirely, diminished," he said. He said he received crank letters blaming him for Kennedy's death, but they too have ceased.

The governor says he believes the Warren Commission properly investigated all details of the shootings. He is confident that Lee Harvey Oswald was the man behind the rifle, as the report by the commission concludes.

As for Jack Ruby, the Dallas night club operator whose life is at stake for the slaying of Oswald, Connally has little to say.

Dallas Dist. Atty. Henry Wade says he will accept commutation of Ruby's death penalty to life imprisonment. Connally would be the man to commute the sentence and he refuses "to prejudge what actions I might take."