



AP Wirephoto

Bill Greer Of Waynesville Is Proud Of His Mementos

## Former Agent Recalls JFK Assassination

ASHEVILLE (AP) — For retired Secret Service agent Bill Greer, the saddest day of his life came 20 years ago this month when he was driving the presidential limousine in Dallas, Tex.

Greer, who retired with his wife to the mountain community of Waynesville in 1967, says the horror of Nov. 22, 1963, and the death of President John F. Kennedy is still clearly etched in his mind.

On that fateful day, Kennedy and his wife settled into the rear seat of the limousine at Love Field. Texas Governor and Mrs. John Connally sat on the jump seat, facing forward. Greer took the wheel, and beside him sat Special Agent Roy Kellerman.

Earlier that morning, as Kennedy delivered a speech in Fort Worth, it had rained.

"While the president was making his speech, I telephoned Dallas and told them to put the plastic top on the limousine," said Greer. "They put it on, but when the weather cleared within the hour, they took it off again."

Greer drove carefully, mindful of the president's bad back. The motorcade moved into downtown Dallas and turned onto Elm Street, moving past the Texas School Book Depository where Lee Harvey Oswald lurked with a high-powered rifle.

Above the noise of the throng that crowded the street, Greer heard a popping sound. The other agents thought the sounds were firecrackers; Greer thought they were made by a motorcycle backfiring. When he heard a second pop, he looked over his right shoulder and saw blood running down Connally's white shirt.

Kellerman yelled, "We've been hit! Get out of here!" Greer floored the accelerator. Kellerman grabbed the radio and told the car ahead to head for the nearest hospital.

The limousine leaped forward as a third pop sounded. A bullet fragment whipped past Greer's head and smashed into the windshield.

"I didn't have another chance to look back, but I am sure the president was already dead," said Greer. "There was heavy traffic

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... and we had a tough time getting through, but we rushed to the hospital.

"They got (Connally) out first, and moved him quickly into an emergency room. Then they took the president to another emergency room, and I went with him. I stayed with him through the examination and then through the autopsy, and was with him when they put his body in the coffin and took him back to Air Force One."

Greer joined the Secret Service in 1946, drove for Presidents Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson. Greer also chauffeured Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev during his visit to the U.S., and Khrushchev sent him a watch — that didn't work. He drove Queen Elizabeth, Winston

Churchill, Haile Selassie and other dignitaries before retiring.

Greer said he felt drawn to Kennedy because of their Irish heritage. Greer was born in County Tyrone, Ireland, and came to the U.S. at age 18.

Greer says two of his most treasured mementoes were inspired by the assassination.

One is a note from Jackie Kennedy, sent shortly after her husband's slaying. It read, "The president loved you, and you were with him from the beginning to the end."

The second is a note from Connally: "Your skill and efficiency saved my life. The doctors said if I had reached the hospital 15 minutes later, I would have been dead."