



Arthur Herman Bremer, between girls at top left, in a 1967 high school yearbook photo

Major Assassination Attempts Since 1835

One out of every five Presidents in roughly the last century has been assassinated.

Since 1835 there have been 41 known assassination attempts directed against Presidents, Governors, Senators and Representatives in this country. They have been more or less evenly distributed over the last 137 years.

Facts such as these, in the view of social scientists who had been asked to explain an apparent increase in American political violence, show that if this society is to be considered violent today, it has always

been violent.

Following are summaries of all the known attempts on the lives of Presidents prior to the assassination of John F. Kennedy on Nov. 22, 1963.

ANDREW JACKSON

Jan. 30, 1835

Although as a child Richard Lawrence was said to be a loner, his friends noticed nothing unusual in this quiet man until he was 32. Then he became mentally ill, subject to fits of unprovoked violence. He said he was Richard III of England and that President Jackson was responsible for his financial losses. Armed with two pistols, Lawrence rushed up to the President as he was leaving the Capitol rotunda in a funeral procession. From 13 feet away he aimed the first pistol but the gun misfired. Before onlookers could wrestle him down, he aimed the second pistol. It too misfired. At the trial Lawrence pleaded insanity and spent the rest of his life in mental hospitals.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

April 14, 1865

John Wilkes Booth had grown up in a troubled home. His parents did not marry until he was 13 and his father died a year later. Booth was a temperamental, often violent, youngster who shot cats and dogs for fun. Always overshadowed by Edwin, his famous actor-brother, Booth, also an actor, was often ridiculed for forgetting his lines on stage. Humiliated, he journeyed to the South, adopted its cause and, two years before the deed remarked that a man could immortalize himself by killing President Lincoln. Obsessed with the idea that Lincoln was trying to become king of the United States and hoping to become a Confederate hero, Booth shot the President and, during the chase afterward, wrote in his diary, "Our country owed all her troubles to him and God simply made me the instrument of his punishment."

JAMES GARFIELD

July 2, 1881

Eight years before the assassination, Charles J. Guiteau's father wrote of his son, "I found he was deceitful, stubborn, wilful, conceited . . . wicked, apparently possessed of the devil. I thought he was insane. I . . . regard his case as hopeless and of course know no other way but to dismiss him entirely from my mind and leave him entirely in the hands of his Maker." The younger Guiteau, whose careers included those of lawyer, evan-

gelist, insurance salesman and swindler, believed himself to be, indeed, in the hands of his Maker—directed to kill President Garfield. The idea came to him after he had delivered speeches in favor of Garfield's election and, after the inauguration, wrote to the President that he would be willing to accept an ambassadorship. Ignored, Guiteau purchased a pistol, walked up behind the President one day as he was boarding a train and shot him. He was tried and hanged after two attempts had been made to shoot him in jail.

WILLIAM MCKINLEY

Sept. 6, 1901

Those who knew Leon F. Czolgosz said he was distant, that he seldom answered people who spoke to him, that he seemed never to have any fun. Until he was 25 he was not thought to be ill but then, after a "nervous breakdown," he deteriorated. He could not hold a job. He spent his time brooding and reading news-

papers. He never had a girl friend. He thought people were trying to poison his food, so he took to fixing his own meals. When King Humbert I of Italy was assassinated in 1900 by an anarchist, the event fascinated him. He studied anarchism, pronounced himself an anarchist and declared that he was against religion, marriage and government. When he heard that President McKinley was to visit nearby Buffalo for an exposition, Czolgosz went there, bought a gun, wrapped it in his hand with a cloth to resemble a bandage, and joined the line that was shaking hands with the President. As he approached McKinley, Czolgosz fired twice and, as the crowd subdued him, said "I done my duty." The trial took eight and one-half hours and Czolgosz was electrocuted.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

Oct. 14, 1912

Less than a day after McKinley's death, John N. Schrank dreamed that the dead President appeared to him and commanded him to avenge the murder. The apparition said that Vice President Theodore Roosevelt, who had succeeded McKinley, was the real murderer. Eleven years later Schrank had a similar vision and he knew it was time. Roosevelt, then out of office, was a candidate for President. Schrank bought a gun and followed the candidate from city to city, waiting for his chance. Then one night, as Roosevelt was in an open car on his way to make a speech, Schrank, only six feet away, reached and

fired. The bullet struck Roosevelt but did not penetrate deeply. It had been showed by a metal spectacle case and a 50-page speech folded double in Roosevelt's breast pocket. The candidate went on to make his speech, unhindered by the bullet holes in each page, and only then went to a hospital. The wound was not serious. At Schrank's trial it came out that he had been a lonely child, preoccupied with fantasies and delusions. Psychiatrists found Schrank psychotic, stopped the trial, and the man died in a mental hospital 31 years later.

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

Feb. 15, 1933

Giuseppe Zangara never succeeded at anything in his life. At the age of six, in his native Italy, Zangara's father took him out of school and put him to work. He hated his father and for the rest of his life blamed his father's action for a variety of psychomatic ailments. After coming to the United States, Zangara's hatred of all authority figures increased. He believed that rulers were keeping the poor poor and that the world would benefit if rulers were eliminated. One day the idea came to him to kill a President but because he was living in Miami and did not like the cold, he settled for President-elect Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was to come to town for a speech. Zangara bought a gun and went to the amphitheater but arrived too late to get a seat. As Roosevelt spoke, Zangara had to stand among the crowd in the aisles. Less than five feet tall (and weighing 106 pounds) he could not see to shoot until at the end, as the crowd was leaving, he climbed up on a vacated folding chair, reached over the heads of the crowd and fired wildly in Roosevelt's direction. The Mayor of Chicago, Anton Cermak, was killed. Four other persons were wounded. Roosevelt was unhurt.

HARRY S. TRUMAN

Nov. 1, 1950

Probably the only attempt on a President's life to be inspired by true political belief and not out of mental illness was the attack by two Puerto Rican nationalists, Oscar Collazo and Griselio Torresola, on President Truman as he was living in Blair House while the White House was being renovated. They attempted to storm the residence but, in a gun battle with guards, Torresola and one guard were killed and Collazo was captured. President Truman, who was inside sleeping,

was not hurt. Psychiatrists found Collazo not to be mentally ill. The would-be assassins hoped their actions would lead to independence for Puerto Rico.