

-6-

Throughout the plane trip, Mrs. Kennedy sat in the vicinity of the coffin talking to Mr. O'Donnell and various close members of the party. During the course of the flight, determination of the immediate action on arrival in Washington was made to assure complete compliance with Mrs. Kennedy's wishes. I spoke to her while kneeling on the floor so I would be at the level of her face rather than leaning forward, and expressed complete desire of all of us and especially of myself to comply with her wishes, stating that it was necessary that the President be taken to a hospital prior to going to the White House. She questioned why and I stated it must be determined, if possible, the type of building used and compare this with Air Force material found. I stated frankly that I had no preference, that it could be any hospital, but that I did feel that, if possible, it should be a military hospital for security measures. The question was answered by her stating that she wanted the President taken to Bethesda Naval Hospital. Arrangements were made on the ground for departure to Walter Reed Army Hospital or Bethesda Naval Hospital, as the case may be.

Mrs. Kennedy advised that she would accompany the body to Bethesda Naval Hospital and ride in the ambulance. I assured Mrs. Kennedy at this point that I would remain with the President until he was returned to the White House. The

COMMISSION EXHIBIT NO. 1126-Continued

-7-

body was carried by the Secret Service and assisted by the members of the Air Force "T" crew. The body was removed from the plane by an elevated truck at the level of the exit from the plane. Mrs. Kennedy, the Attorney General, members of the Secret Service and I were on the platform which was lowered to the ground level. The casket was removed by the same group and placed in the waiting ambulance. I was the last to alight from the platform.

Mrs. Kennedy, the Attorney General and Clint Hill rode with the body in the rear compartment of the ambulance. The driver, Paul Jankis and I rode in the driver's compartment to the hospital. Mrs. Kennedy upon arrival at the hospital went to the 17th floor with the members of the party. The body was taken to the mortuary where I met it and observed its transfer to the table. The examination was performed by Commander Hines and members of his staff. Also present were Medical Army, Medical College, and Captain Conda. General Hough had remained in the vicinity of the President constantly throughout this time.

I made numerous trips to the 17th floor for reassurance to those in that area and to supply them with some idea of the contemplated departure time. On one of those occasions, Mrs. Kennedy signed to me in the bottom

COMMISSION EXHIBIT NO. 1126-Continued

-8-

of the suite expressing her appreciation which was greatly valued by me and which I will long remember. The jewelry of the President was fully checked in a blue suit, white shirt, tie, socks and shoes. His hair was combed in the usual fashion and his appearance in the casket gave no evidence of the injury he had received. During the examination we received a call from the 17th floor in regard to Mrs. Kennedy's wedding ring which was in place on the ring finger in the appropriate position. This ring I removed personally and carried to her on the 17th floor and gave it to her in person. The original casket which

-9-

The following day we had a request for the St. Christopher medal which the President always carried in his wallet. The wallet and the rest of the clothes had been taken into custody of the Secret Service and was obtained by Mr. O'Leary and the St. Christopher medal given to Mrs. Kennedy. It was stated that she related to have this placed in the casket with the President's body.

/s/ George D. Barkley  
Physician to the President

he returned immediately

st trying circumstances  
no privacy. Affairs of  
the same conversation.  
from John McCone. In  
ed by Rufe Youngblood  
at the National Cathed-  
d's motherly pride ex-  
right to the Governor's  
ldren. Johnson said he  
ls at once. Youngblood  
felt that the Johnsons  
hanson wisely demurred.  
said. "I won't do it."

think first of security."  
protect the Elms, too,  
l.

bleary screen. It was  
windowpane, and the  
he networks had estab-  
nday. Having canceled  
; in with eulogies from  
t, and video tapes of  
rom time to time there  
till photographs of the  
Bonn had alerted his  
wald's background was  
for Soviet citizenship,  
ow common knowledge,  
ter of conjecture.

ootball was aboard, he  
d. Johnson nodded and  
o the rear passed and  
ed President Kennedy's  
e of them bloodstained  
him and Mrs. Johnson  
rd, sitting alone on the  
eras, had the extraordi-  
air of sedation." It was  
intop and seeing every  
you was seeing it as a  
but to someone else.  
to go over her notes.

Liz, however, was under the impression that Bird just wanted company. Thinking ahead, she told the new First Lady, "You'll be asked to say something when we get there." Mrs. Johnson thought a minute. She said, "I just feel it's all been a dreadful nightmare and somehow we must find the strength to go on." Liz said, "Well, that will be your statement," and wrote it down.

Johnson instructed Youngblood to be sure that an agent was with the casket. Rufe replied that Behn, at Roy Kellerman's suggestion, had already established a new shift; Kellerman, Hill, Landis, and O'Leary were assigned to the slain President and his wife. Then Johnson beckoned to Moyers. He told him that he had no intention of entering the bedroom now. Perhaps the widow would like to use it to clean up. Moyers, the gentle nexus, went back to tell Jacqueline Kennedy.

Mrs. Kennedy, in Moyers' words, "chose to stay with the body." In her own words she sat looking at "that long, long coffin."

She sat on the aisle seat, closest to the body; Ken O'Donnell brooded beside her. After the hasty reconstruction of the tail compartment to accommodate the casket, those were the only two seats left. Godfrey, Larry, and Dave stood throughout the flight, and the visitors from the staff cabin would stand among them, shifting this way and that to avoid jostling one another. Afterward an incorrect report was circulated that some of them sat on the casket. They never touched it. Mary Gallagher felt a pervasive desire to kiss it, but knowing that would upset Mrs. Kennedy she turned away. Like everyone there, Mary's first thought was to spare the widow, to help and serve her. There was about them an air of consecration; they couldn't even bring themselves to lean over her. When Larry O'Brien first spoke to her, he knelt, and the others followed his example. Approaching Andrews, O'Donnell rose and knelt, too.

This was an entirely new relationship. The day had gone forever when the pols dismissed the President's wife as Jackie the Socialite. And she herself was a new Jackie, transformed by her vow that the full impact of the loss should be indelibly etched upon the national conscience. She declined Moyers' invitation because she had no need of the bedroom. Remembering the strangeness of the fresh clothes that had been laid out there, she reflected that during her three years in the White House she had learned much about Lyndon Johnson. Their rapport had been excellent, but a great deal depended upon what the press was told when they landed. She sent for Kilduff and said, "You make sure, Mac—you go and tell them that I came back here and sat with Jack." Kilduff bowed his head. He mumbled, "I will."

The new Jackie contrasted so sharply with the First Lady they had known that even the inner circle of Kennedy intimates were slow to grasp the extent of the *volte-face*. For as long as they could remember she had

been quiet and retiring; she had dodged limelight, and when she did appear in public she was the apotheosis of the well-groomed alumna of Miss Chapin's, Miss Porter's, and Vassar. Stoughton had read O'Donnell's thoughts correctly; Ken was furious about the release of the oath pictures, fearful that they would show the stains on her. The feeling that something must be done about her appearance had become universal. In the stateroom the Johnsons and Rufe Youngblood were concerned about it, but so were the standees in the tail cabin. "Why not change?" Godfrey asked her. She shook her head vigorously. Kilduff saw the rust-red blood caked under the bracelet on her left wrist and recoiled. Mary's first thought, on arriving from the front of the plane, was to fetch a warm washcloth and soap. Speaking in hushed tones, she consulted Godfrey, Clifton, and Clint Hill about it until O'Donnell came over and said, "Don't do anything. Let her stay the way she is." Ken now grasped her purpose. Finally she broke her silence and spelled it out to Dr. Burkley. Kneeling, the physician indicated her ghastly skirt with a trembling hand. "Another dress?" he suggested diffidently. "No," she whispered fiercely. "Let them see what they've done."

The last man to realize that she really meant it was Kilduff. He thought long about how they could offload the coffin at Andrews without pictures being taken. His solution was to open the galley door on the starboard side, opposite the usual exit. That way the great mass of the fuselage would mask both the coffin and the widow; photographers and television cameramen would see nothing. He proposed the plan. She vetoed it. "We'll go out the regular way," she said. "I want them to see what they have done."

What had been done had unstrung everyone else in the cabin, and they talked disjointedly. Kilduff tearfully told her about his four-year-old son Kevin, who had been drowned while he was abroad on a trip with the President. To Bill Moyers, Larry O'Brien appeared resigned, a man drained of all vitality. Moyers expressed his own sorrow. Larry said haltingly, "It's incredible—he put all of this into it—he worked so hard for it—and this is what happened—this is how it ends." Godfrey McHugh kept repeating to himself, "He's my President—my President." Dave Powers reminisced about their trip to Ireland in June and the Celtic songs Kennedy had loved there: "The Boys from Wexford," "Danny Boy," and "Kelly, the Boy from Killane." Dazedly Ken O'Donnell said, "You know what, Jackie? Can you tell me why we were saying that this morning? What was it he said at the hotel? Last night would have been the best night to assassinate a President. Can you tell me why we were talking about that? I've never discussed that with him in my life."

She shook her head. She herself had discussed it with her husband; she was recalling a conversation with him the Easter after his inaugural, and how they had concluded that they would have to rely upon the Secret Service. But this was no time to go into that. Really, words were

so pointless now; Evelyn Lincoln what else to say she recalled all right." Jacqueline Kennedy

Abruptly O'Donnell rose. I'm going to have a hell of a

She was dubious. She had a drink might trigger uncontrolled

"I'll make it for you. I'll make it. I've never had Scotch in my life.

But maybe he was right. I'm in a shock. She hesitated, then she said

"Now is as good a time as any to

On a signal from him—he had a table soup saturnalia—Sergo brought her a tall, dark, black creosote. Nevertheless she had a funeral, when she had moved on she would take. She never forgot that trip back from Dallas. She never forget.

The clutch of men standing in the staff cabin Kilduff was drinking gin and tonic as he calculated that between Dallas and the thirds of a bottle of gin. I was of Terror as something to give the hideous ride, and

Liquor didn't help. It did not help to the passengers' trauma. O'Donnell's instinct had been to have been ravaged and she had control cabin Colonel Swinburn promising himself a tall job. He would keep the tap water. Kilduff, however, had given up in despair. I met Mrs. Kennedy and she was outraged; from their conversation enough to give them some

The decision to move to the hospital in the aisle, explained there would have to be a hospital that the hospital be military. Reed.