

Thousands visit JFK grave; shooting site named landmark

By David E. Rosenbaum
The New York Times

ARLINGTON, Va. — On the 30th anniversary of John F. Kennedy's death, thousands of tourists filed quietly past his grave at Arlington National Cemetery Monday, and the plaza in Dallas where he was fatally shot was declared a National Historic Landmark.

Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, the former president's only surviving brother, arrived at the grave shortly after 3 p.m. with Rep. Joseph P. Kennedy II and their wives.

They each laid a white rose at the foot of the tombstone, knelt, crossed themselves and appeared to pray silently before the eternal flame for about two minutes. Then they walked around a bend to the grave of Robert F. Kennedy, Joseph's father, and prayed briefly there.

They were apparently the only family members to go to the grave. Family members said long ago that they preferred to commemorate Kennedy's birthday, May 29, rather than the date of his death.

In downtown Dallas, Nellie Connally, the widow of former Gov. John B. Connally of Texas, unveiled a bronze plaque designating Dealy Plaza, where Kennedy was shot, a historic landmark. The Con-

nallys were riding in the open limousine with Kennedy and his wife when the president was shot. Connally was wounded.

"Thirty years ago," Nellie Connally said, "fate brought me here as an unwilling player in the most unforgettable tragic drama of our time. Now, three decades later, we are gathered not to look back with grief, but to look forward with hope."

Connally died in June.

In Dublin, Jean Kennedy Smith, the former president's sister, who is now the U.S. ambassador to Ireland, led a memorial Mass that was attended by about 1,500 people, including Prime Minister Albert Reynolds.

At the cemetery here, dozens of wreaths and bouquets were placed next to the Kennedy grave, as were several letters and poems on lined paper from schoolchildren. The largest wreath — green, orange and white carnations — was left by the members of the John F. Kennedy Division No. 5 of the Ancient Order of Hibernians.

A member of the group, Matt Ryan from Ammandale, Va., said he came to the cemetery often to honor Kennedy on St. Patrick's Day and on major anniversaries of the assassination.

Thirty years ago Monday, said Ryan, now 72, he was running a luncheonette in Riverhead, N.Y. "This really brings back memories," he said.

Others like Lisa Markle of Washington County, Md., and Les

Manzer of Gainesville, Ga., made special trips here from out of town. Elena Bonafonte-Vidotto and Stanley Botts said they were at the grave for the first time even though they have lived for years across the Potomac in Washington.

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