

# Teaching J.F.K.

By PATT MORRISON,  
Times Staff Writer

**I**t remains more real to us than even fragments of our own lives.

Year passes year; everything else can fade from memory—your first car, your first date, old jobs and old addresses. Entire people slip beyond recall.

But if you were alive then, and sentient, there it is, acid-etched, and as green in memory as the grassy knoll: A flutter of rose petals in the back-seat abattoir of a Lincoln convertible. The face of a gunman become victim himself, his yawn of pain detailed in phosphor dots on a television screen. The bier, and the flag, and the girl, and the woman in black. New words, made abruptly as familiar as your own name: a rifle called Mannlicher Carcano. A hospital named Parkland.

The news reports remarked thereafter

## In a World Removed From the One in Which He Fell, Teachers Try to Define a President's Legacy

at each turn of the calendar: it was a year ago today that President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas. Five years. Ten years ago, then 20.

Now it is 25 years, an eon in the Microchip Age. More than a third of the nation's population has been born since a death in Dallas notched Americans into those who remember and those who do not.

It has become history, and thus it has been given to teachers to transmit.

To help students realize why, when special effects and high-resolution video have rendered fantasy more engrossing than reality, their elders should still be transfixed by a joggly 17 seconds from an indistinct home movie of a presidential

motorcade, and brought to tears by drab black-and-white reruns of funerary ceremonies.

To bring to teen-agers—born into a presidency that fell because of cover-up and conspiracy—a comprehension of a time when a man who occupied high public office could be as esteemed as the office itself.

**T**o convey to kids—who, by the age of 18 may have been benumbed by 15,000 make-believe TV murders—why it is that this single, real killing should have left their elders bereft, feeling that each had had stolen away some bedazzling spring of promise. That America, the America before Nov. 22,

1963, was a prideful, hopeful place, above the sordid brutishness of lesser nations. Not here, we had told ourselves; not us.

Do not bother to look for Gilbert Stuart's portrait of George Washington on the walls of Jeff Button's classroom at Huntington Beach High School. The faces painted there are newer icons: Sylvester Stallone, James Dean, Marilyn Monroe.

And when Button feels the time is right to teach J.F.K., there is "probably not a subject you could mention more that students will tune in more and listen to what you say . . . it is probably the most fascinating subject for students outside of the 'hippie' syndrome."

Not always, however, for the best of reasons in the judgment of the 36-year-old teacher who was among the crowd of eager high school students at the Amba-

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TONY BARNARD / Los Angeles Times

"They come back and say,  
" . . . my dad . . . even  
remembers where he was  
when he was shot."

—Kris Gutierrez,  
Jefferson High School





WILLIAM S. MURPHY / Los Angeles Times

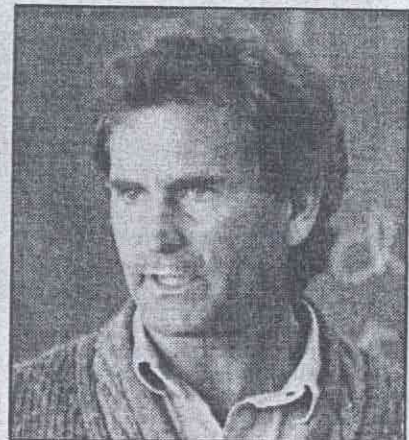
John F. Kennedy: One-third of the population has been born since his death.



ELLEN JASKOL / Los Angeles Times

**'We try to rewrite history  
and say Kennedy was great  
and glorious . . . kids want  
to know, what did he do?'**

—Sharon Bergh,  
Franklin High School

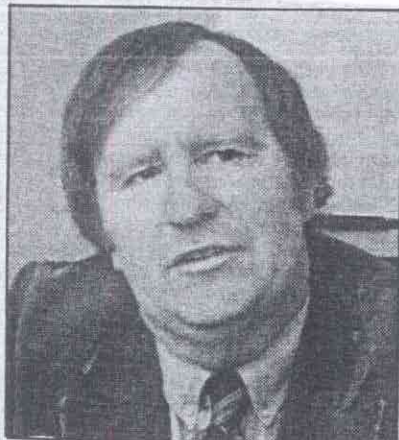


JIM MENDENHALL / Los Angeles Times

**'Quite frankly, I think a lot  
are still interested in the  
dirt. You mention J.F.K.,  
they say Marilyn Monroe.'**

—Jeff Button,  
Huntington Beach High School





TONY BARNARD / Los Angeles Times

**'It's hard to ask somebody to volunteer to help their country when they baby-sit two or three sisters.'**

—Hayes Thrower,  
Jefferson High School

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sador Hotel the night in 1968 that Robert F. Kennedy was murdered.

"The downside is that the interest is not in the history, or the politics, but the crime, the glamour . . . Quite frankly, I think a lot are still interested in the dirt of it. You mention J.F.K. and they say Marilyn Monroe." For a lot of them, video-numbered, "the funeral of J.F.K. doesn't compete with the fourth rerun of 'Robocop.'"

His English students relish the crime and glamour; his honors history students, anxious about college, are impatient at dwelling on "one single incident that 99 times out of 100 isn't dealt with in the AP or SAT tests." For many of them, it is "probably just another part of history," as distant and dead as Lincoln.

If it is a disappointment for Button, an ardent and devoted teacher, it is one he turns to his advantage. "It's politics, history, glamour, power, charisma, money, corruption . . . I don't think all year long there's been such a tool for captivating people."

Button believes in the teacher as storyteller. So he takes the time to build, block by block, through McCarthyism and Little Rock and Berlin and TV debates, to the world of 1963, when "politicians were less

crass and hated than now. It was a time of hope for the country: Civil rights programs, the space program, the Peace Corps"—and there were Kennedys, "white shirts, sleeves rolled up, those little thin ties pulled off to the side; they can just see them doing battle. They can see the change they were offering America."

**Talk to Parents**

Two weeks ago at this high school, mock presidential voting gave 80% to George Bush, 20% to Michael Dukakis. And when the time comes for Button to assign students to go home and talk to their parents about Dallas and J.F.K., a dislike of Kennedy's policies often communicates itself into the students' generation.

"What happened to, like, the Bay of Pigs, when he lost?" asked one boy, the class' outspoken conservative. Then "he was killed, and all of a sudden people thought he was perfect."

"You can't rip on a dead guy," another student countered.

The conservative young man thought a moment. "Kennedy had a much bigger fault than Iran-Contra. He was unfaithful to his wife."

The assassination is, at bottom, a generational event, like the death of F.D.R. or, to a lesser degree, the Challenger explosion. Button feels that perhaps this generation's detachment from its elders' emotions is not altogether a bad thing.

"Watergate, Vietnam [have] convinced the typical American and especially the young that the government is not all good." And seeing events without tears or rosy glasses, "maybe there is a little more rational questioning. If you can look at this emotion with the Kennedys, you can see the same thing with Reagan/Bush in reverse, Ollie North, wrapped in the flag. It lets you see how certain emotional events can almost blind you to reality."

□

Sharon Bergh's father taught high-school government, and in November 1963, he told his children, as he told his students, remember this, this is important.

Bergh, who was barely 5, teaches government and economics herself now, and every year, one student or another does a J.F.K. term paper. J.F.K. and the space pro-

gram, or the Cuban missile crisis, or Berlin. The things on paper, the things in books, don't vanish.

But the other part, the *feeling* of it, is elusive. Franklin High School in Highland Park is a beachhead neighborhood of new immigrant Latinos and Asians. Boat people who have eaten lizards to survive and buried relatives by the score and kids who see friends die routinely in gang cross fire find that wistfulness for one dead President in 1963 is hardly worth a backward glance from the flinty realities of life in 1988.

#### Kids Are Younger

And to teach 1963 "is hard," says Bergh, "because there are some things you assume as background; you forget every group of kids coming in is a bit younger, maybe from a foreign country. So it gets further and further from shared experiences."

In her government textbook, there are only two references to the Kennedy assassination. Bergh sometimes tells them, "I have to take a minute and share the personal aspect of this," though she herself was only 5. "You couldn't believe the optimism, the hope, the

prosperity, the we-can-do-it spirit" of 1963. "Then I say, 'think of the hostages, the gas lines,' that when Carter left office there was not a good feeling about being American."

Time has altered other things as well.

These students are propelled by the twin pistons of success and money. Bergh's honors students are dedicated to math and science, to cultivating salable skills for big-ticket professions, she says. The yearbook editor, a Korean-American, walked off with a post-election trophy—a Bush-Quayle sign.

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Amid such focused intensity, there is one further lesson of the Kennedy era that Bergh is finding hard to teach. It is public service.

Each day the students see Bergh come to work, in her faded yellow classroom, a former choral music room, a converted trailer with no windows and not enough blackboards and a roof that leaks without fail when the rains come. Teaching? her students ask in sincere perplexity. "Why would you want to do that?"

"I think they're much more cynical. Perhaps they're less idealistic, more self-centered, and feel they can't get involved . . . The people who counted on the Kennedys, with hope, got ripped apart."

Because of that, perhaps, "public service, civic duty really aren't in their vocabulary except as a small, small few. Both Bush and Dukakis stressed public service, but I don't think (the students) believe it."

#### Other Assassinations

Bergh feels that distance has cleared the view to history's horizon; other assassinations have diluted the horror of this one. "We try to rewrite history and say Kennedy was great and glorious . . . kids want to know, what did he do? They're much more practical in that. We tend to look at that period and say wasn't everything wonderful? But the realities of the time were that for a whole bunch of people things weren't wonderful."

"I think it's our generation that hasn't put it in perspective yet; this generation . . . can't figure how anyone could have been enamored of a President. Presidents come and go, they resign in disgrace. They're just politicians, they're not part of our lives. The mystique isn't there for them."

□

"Past Leaders Have Sacrificed," read the hand-lettered sign under Martin Luther King Jr.'s picture in a Jefferson High School classroom. "How about YOU?"

"His words immortal," a student's chalked message on an adjacent blackboard noted of J.F.K. "His spirit eternal like the flame." The jeering question someone scribbled beneath that had been hastily erased: "But what about Marilyn Monroe?"

Jefferson High teacher Hayes Thrower, 38, sighed tolerantly. That is how some of his students think of J.F.K. At least before Thrower gets to them. Thrower, who at age 12 pedaled his bike



frantically alongside the President's blue limousine in a Connecticut town, close enough to touch. Thrower, who passed out J.F.K. literature at age 10. Who circulated petitions to reopen the investigation into the assassination. And who now has developed, with a fellow teacher, a warts-and-all program he makes available to other social studies teachers, about assassinations and American politics, with more than 60 hours of videotape and file drawers of clippings and documents.

Thrower's students at Jefferson High School are, many of them, inner-city kids on whose living room walls hang photos of both Kennedys, or King.

"As a teacher you have to impress on them your strong belief in the American system. It's hard to ask somebody to volunteer to help their country when they baby-sit two or three sisters so their mothers can work at night . . . but you tell them if they work hard and get an education they *can* improve and take advantage of some of the opportunities available to them in part through programs that had a genesis in the Kennedy 1960s."

For that, he believes, was the jumping-off point of modern history, and Kennedy "the first modern President."

What is more difficult to evoke for students is the aura of 1963. When crack cocaine is sold as openly as ice cream bars, and chalk outlines of crime victims adorn streets and sidewalks. "They don't see the country as what our parents told us, a safe and secure place that'd be good to us. I don't think we can ever recreate that feeling, just as we'll never understand what it was like to be pioneers like Lewis and Clark."

#### A Simpler World

"A lot of us younger teachers feel sorry for them [students today], knowing what an impact it [the assassination] had in our lives, how we feel it played a role in making us the kind of teachers we are," Thrower says. "The world was a little simpler for us, the issues more defined. How do you demonstrate against gang warfare? The deficit? AIDS?"

So he indulges the student who writes "What about Marilyn Monroe?" on the chalkboard; if no one teaches them otherwise, the celebrity stuff, the miniseries-as-history, is all they hear.

"For me the overwhelming positive attitude of Kennedy is he believed in the role of a citizen accepting responsibility and no matter how bad things are here, it is still better than any place else.

Those things are still valid and teachable."

□

She can have them read or watch videos until their eyes start to fog, but what Kris Gutierrez has found to be the most effective homework for learning J.F.K. is telling students to ask three older people about Nov. 22, 1963.

"They come back and say, 'God, my dad knows so much about this, he even remembers where he was when he was shot.' So they want to know what it was about this guy that made it so."

Gutierrez could tell them her story: Kneeling in church at age 8 that day, then watching her father, a jeweler who never cared *that* for politics, craft a little gold charm of John Kennedy Jr. saluting his father's coffin, and getting a thank-you note from the widow to whom he sent it.

Gutierrez, now 33, is teaching her first year in Los Angeles, at Jefferson High in the inner city, after several years of teaching private and upper-middle-class public schools in the Bay Area.

#### A Day's Study

And by taking a day or so for this one incident in one nation's history from a class that must span many centuries, "I'm trying to inspire them to get an emotional attachment to this person, as well as an intellectual understanding of what he portrayed."

And when the questions arise, as they always do, about the Mafia and starlets and conspiracy, "it leads into issues of 'what do we want to hear about our heroes,' and 'what do we want to be protected from.' It forces them to look at their own ideas about their idols."

Naturally, it makes it more personal: "because I have anger, sadness, frustration, hope, when I talk to them, I'm more passionate about it. And they say, who *was* this person who created such a sense of hope?"

It isn't just Kennedy, of course. "Emotion is what history is about. They've got to realize that today is history . . . history is life, it's not names in a book, facts on a page. They need to tap into individuals making decisions, 600 years ago or yesterday."

Every history teacher strives to evoke a vivid realism for every incident he or she teaches: the Reformation, the armistice. For this time, at least, it comes easily. "It's almost like I'm two people in the classroom, the historian there to present different biases, and the human being with my own passion for the man, to get *them* to feel a passion about their own lives."



# Life Catches Up to Marina Oswald

By ALLAN GRANT

**M**arina Oswald was a very sweet and gentle lady, and it especially showed in the relationship she had with her children, even under such stress. She had an inner peace that I felt would save her from being destroyed by this catastrophic event that took her husband from her in the same way and as swiftly as John F. Kennedy was taken away from his family.

The tragedy was overwhelming for the Kennedys and for our country. But there was no less a personal tragedy in the one that received very little press at the time of the assassination, the tragedy of this young bewildered family that Lee Harvey Oswald left behind the day after he picked up his rifle, peered through the telescopic sight and squeezed the trigger.

At 10:46 a.m. Friday, Nov. 22, 1963, when I was called at my home in Los Angeles by the chief of the West Coast bureau of Life magazine and told that President Kennedy had been shot, I thought it

was a very sick practical joke. I was getting ready for a 3-day weekend on my boat. I was told to get to the airport. There would be a special flight to Dallas at the American Airlines terminal.

Every journalist in the world seemed to be on that flight, a lot of them looking as if they had just crawled out of bed. The aisles were

## First Person

cluttered with TV and photo equipment. It was one of the biggest stories of the century, but no one knew much of anything. Rumors abounded.

About 11:05 a.m. the pilot announced it over the intercom. "Ladies and gentlemen. . . ." He paused. "We have just been informed that President John F. Kennedy has died. I'm so sorry. . . ." His voice choked up then faded out.

The aisles cleared as everybody

quietly returned to their seats. A few minutes later, as I looked around the cabin, I saw some of the toughest news people I knew sobbing. I knew then that the tragedy of this moment would last a long time.

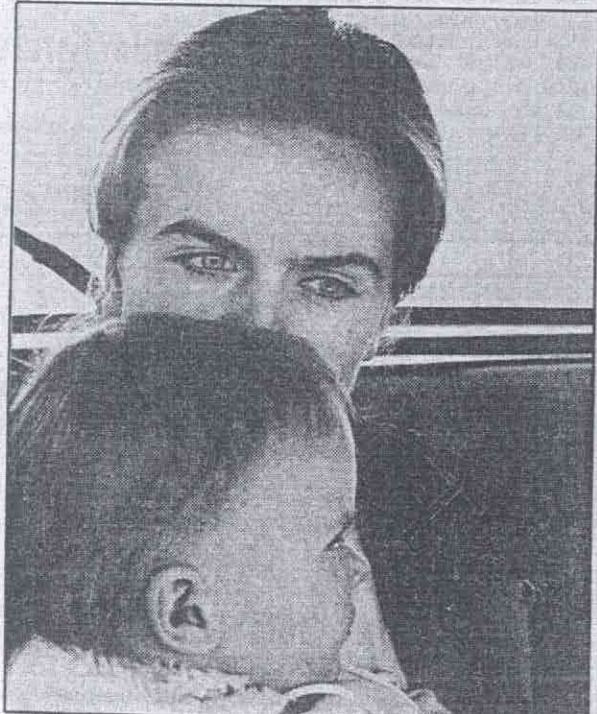
Life teams were being flown in from Washington and Chicago. I was one of four Life photographers who would be arriving in Dallas along with five Life correspondents.

When we landed we contacted the Dallas bureau of Life and were told of the capture, in a theater, of Lee Harvey Oswald, a suspect in the shooting. Oswald was being held in the Dallas County jail and Life reporter Tommy Thompson and I rented a car and headed there. Tommy, a young, aggressive reporter, born in Texas, had joined the Life staff a couple of years before.

The corridors of the jail were swarming with photographers and

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Los Angeles Times



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Marina Oswald holds her 18-month-old daughter.



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reporters. Some were standing on chairs, some on their camera cases. I had covered many stories in my 23 years with Life but never had I seen so many reporters and photographers pushing and shoving as I saw in this tiny corridor—all to get in position for the same photograph of suspect Lee Harvey Oswald being led from one room to another.

I told Tommy Thompson that we should get out of there and look for a more exclusive angle to the story. Before we left the Dallas jail, Tommy, using his Texas accent and disarming demeanor, located a deputy sheriff who seemed to know a lot about the one suspect they had captured.

#### Friendly Housekeeper

Tommy managed to get the address of the rooming house in Dallas where Oswald was staying. We headed for 1026 N. Beckley Ave. in southwest Dallas. There we found a red brick house with a friendly, talkative housekeeper, Erlene Roberts, who showed us the closet-size room that she rented to "O. H. Lee" for \$8 a week.

She showed us the phone in the rooming house and told us of the phone calls made by "Mr. Lee" to somebody in Irving, Tex.—a small town between Dallas and Ft. Worth. She said that he always spoke in a foreign language when he made those calls.

When Tommy asked about the last time she had seen "Mr. Lee" Mrs. Roberts said that he had returned to the rooming house a few hours before, around 1 p.m., which was very unusual for him, and she remarked to him that he "seemed to be in an awful hurry."

Oswald did not respond. A few minutes later he emerged from his room zipping up his jacket and rushed out. A short time later, she said, a swarm of what she thought were Secret Service men or FBI agents descended on the rooming house looking for evidence. We thanked the landlady for the information and headed toward Irving.

On the way out I shot some photographs of some of Oswald's neighbors in the boarding house, watching the TV screen for a glimpse of the man they knew as O. H. Lee.

Once we got to Irving, we had no idea of who or what we were looking for. On a hunch I turned a corner and found a lone sheriff's car parked in front of a building where a flag flew at half staff. We entered and found a sheriff's dispatcher. Tommy once again turned on that Texas charm and asked the

dispatcher if anything had gone on in Irving that day concerning the shooting of the President. Well, replied the man convinced we were Dallas newsmen, as a matter of fact there were "feds" out here earlier, looking for some woman a few streets south of here. He gave us the name of the street but no address and no name for the woman.

We found the street which, fortunately, was only a few blocks long. But in those few blocks there were at least 30 houses lining both sides of that street. We spotted a man getting out of a car and leaped to life. We were convinced that he was a reporter who knew more than we did.

The man opened the trunk of his car and removed several bags of groceries. Relieved, I hung a couple of cameras around my neck and Tommy and I approached him. He looked at us and smiled. "Well," he said, "we wondered when the press would find us. You might as well come inside."

#### More Surprises

Michael Paine introduced himself and his ex-wife, Ruth Paine. Tommy asked Ruth Paine if she knew Lee Harvey Oswald. Yes, she said, Lee is a friend. He lives here with his wife Marina. When Tommy asked her if she thought that Oswald had killed the President, a distraught-looking elderly woman wearing a nurse's uniform, with her stockings rolled down to her knees, jumped up and said, "Don't you think that I should answer that question; I am Lee's mother." Tommy and I were astounded and, moments later, we got another shock.

A pretty, pale young woman appeared in the doorway with a small baby in her arms and headed for the kitchen. That, Ruth Paine said, was Marina Oswald, Lee Harvey's Soviet wife. Her 18-month-old daughter June was asleep in the bedroom. Tommy and I looked at each other in disbelief.

I started taking pictures as unobtrusively as I could, not knowing what to expect from my obvious invasion of these people's privacy. Tommy started asking questions. How long had the Oswalds been living there? How much time did Lee Harvey spend at the Paine house with Marina? When had they last seen him?

Our biggest fear was that at any moment a horde of reporters, photographers and TV newsmen would find the Paine house, just as we had, and snatch the story away from us. We had to move the Oswalds to a different location.

Then the answer came in the form of a question from Marguerite Oswald. "Would it be possible," she asked, "for Marina and I to go to Dallas and see Lee Harvey?" Tommy offered to drive the women and children to Dallas and to give them our room at the Adolphus Hotel—where they could spend the night practically next door to the Dallas jail.

#### 'Scoop of My Career'

Marina didn't want to wake up her children. She told Ruth Paine in Russian she thought it would be best if we picked them up in the early morning. Tommy and I looked at each other and decided not to push our luck.

We sat there in our rented car trying to absorb the last few hours. Tommy was twirling the keys on his index finger, watching the house. "This, my friend, is probably going to be the scoop of my career. I will kill the first newsmen that approaches that house. . . ."

"Let's go," I said, "I want to get this film off to New York."

"We're not leaving here until those lights go out," he said.





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Marina Oswald removes diapers as she prepares to take her babies to visit her husband the day after the assassination.

We sat there in the dark waiting for the sounds of approaching cars. None came. The lights in the house went out. Tommy finally relaxed and we headed back to Dallas.

Early Saturday morning, Nov. 23, we returned, as promised, to the Paine house. There were newly washed diapers drying in the sun and a suitcase to be packed for the short trip to what would turn out to be the end of the world for them. (Within 12 hours Lee Harvey Oswald would be shot and killed by Jack Ruby.)

Marina put a fresh diaper on her daughter, June. Marguerite cradled young Rachel in her arms and wiped away some tears in anticipation of seeing her son in the Dallas jail. We loaded our car with diapers, baby clothes and other necessary items and headed for Dallas.

To avoid running into any press people at the hotel, we took the Oswalds through the basement and then up the freight elevator to our room where we had arranged for a Russian translator. We ordered



breakfast for the Oswalds. The older Mrs. Oswald wanted to call her other son, Robert Oswald, and have him come to the hotel. All morning I carefully took photographs of Marina, trying not to interfere with the normal routine of this young mother and her two children. The older Mrs. Oswald was alternately loving and abusive to her young daughter-in-law, caressing her, then claiming from time to time that she was a "whore" who was responsible for the trouble that Lee Harvey was in. Later, we would refer to her as "Hurricane Momma."

#### A Loud Knock

Shortly before noon there was a loud knock on the door. Tommy slowly opened the door to FBI special agent Bardwell Odum. He asked to see Marina Oswald, and said that he wanted to take her to his office for questioning. Marguerite announced to us that she had made arrangements to see her son—evidently using the phone in her room—with Capt. Will Fitz of the Dallas Police Department, whom she had seen on television.

Meanwhile, I had been shooting pictures as special Agent Odum tried to get Marguerite to persuade Marina to go with him. But the old lady held her ground, determined to see her son as promised by Captain Fitz. She, Marina and Robert were going to see Lee Harvey—as promised—and going nowhere else until they talked to him—as promised.

The visit to Lee Harvey Oswald was set for noon. The arrangement was for us to drop the family off in the basement of the courthouse where they would be met by two detectives. We were to leave and they would return the Oswalds to the hotel after their visit. (As it turned out later Robert was not permitted to see his brother.)

At noon, we left the Oswalds, including the children, at the courthouse. Later we discovered

they had to wait four hours before they got to see Lee Harvey. They offered Marina a private room where she could nurse Rachel and take care of June.

When they finally got to visit Lee Harvey, they spoke to him via telephone from a glass-enclosed booth where they could see, but not touch each other. The meeting lasted for 4 or 5 minutes. Marguerite said Lee Harvey was bruised around the face and had a black eye and that Lee told her it happened during a scuffle. He told Marguerite not to worry, that he was fine, and had arranged for an attorney. Marina stayed on a little longer and when she left she was crying. Marguerite told us that Marina said, "I tell Lee I love Lee and Lee says he love me very much—and Lee tell me to be sure to buy new shoes for June."

Two plainclothesmen brought the Oswalds back to us at the Adolphus Hotel. At this point we decided to move the Oswalds to the outskirts of town. I gave Marguerite money for expenses, which she put in her pocket without looking at it. I drove them to the Executive Inn and helped them get comfortable.

It was about 7 p.m. when I returned to the Adolphus. We had a meeting of the Life people to assess what we had captured on film in the two days in Dallas. Since Oswald was in custody, and the President's funeral was to be the big story for the next issue of Life, the photographers were sent back to their bureaus. I returned to Los Angeles with the memory of the face of the pretty, young Soviet girl whose path crossed with an ex-Marine with a chip on his shoulder.

The next morning, back in Los Angeles, I woke up late to call a friend. "Lee Harvey Oswald has just been shot!" he said. "It's on TV right now."

*Allan Grant lives in Brentwood.*



## Dear Abby

# John F. Kennedy Remembered in Verse

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

DEAR ABBY: News reports indicate that there will be more than the usual annual publicity on the 25th anniversary of the assassination of the late President John F. Kennedy.

Shortly after that unforgettable day, I wrote a poem about the death of President Kennedy and submitted it for publication to the Pacific Telephone Co. where I was employed. It was published in the in-house publication. (I retired from the telephone company 15 years ago.)

This poem was never copyrighted, so anyone who wishes to use it may do so. Abby, I have enjoyed your column for many years and would be honored if you chose to print it.

This poem is not intended to be any kind of political statement. I voted for Kennedy, but I also voted for Eisenhower, Nixon and Reagan.

### ON THE DEATH OF PRESIDENT KENNEDY

I felt the shock and rage and grief  
And gloom and utter disbelief!  
I heard the news; somehow it seemed  
That it was only something dreamed.  
The President was shot, they said —  
A sniper's bullet through the head.  
He'd fallen, and a red blood stain  
Spread on the spot his head was lain.  
There cradled by his young wife's arm,  
Unable now to stop the harm.  
My God, what sort of troubled brain  
Would plot a deed of such disdain?  
We ought by law to burn in flame  
Such seekers of ignoble fame;  
Yes, burn and torture publicly  
To quell such thoughts of infamy!  
Or am I giving vent to hate  
Like that which brewed this tragic fate?

*If Kennedy could speak, I'm sure,  
He'd want us only to endure  
His passing just as we have done;  
Then work to make this country one  
Which really gives equality  
To those who strive to keep it free;  
The nation that will now unite  
More strongly for his goals of right.  
This land, this world will better be  
Because of John F. Kennedy.*

FRED GROBEE,  
Garden Grove

DEAR READERS: Where were you when you heard "the news"? My husband and I were in Tokyo, traveling with then-California Atty. Gen. Stanley Mosk and his wife. (He is now associate justice of the California Supreme Court.)

Mosk was awakened about 5 a.m. by a telephone call from the United States, relating the terrible news. We all turned on the TV and saw Jack Ruby kill Oswald! Our reaction? Shock, horror and disbelief.

We were enormously touched by the sympathy extended by the Japanese people. Wherever we went—in the elevator, in the lobby of our hotel and on the streets of Tokyo—Japanese strangers bowed their heads and said softly, "So sorry about your President."

We were in no mood to continue our vacation, so we cut our trip short and returned home.

CONFIDENTIAL TO HURTING: Cry your eyes out. Let yourself go, and let the tears flow. Give your grief a chance to express itself. It's healthy. Don't try to put on a "brave" show. It takes honesty, strength and courage for a man to express his emotions. That is real manliness. The weak man hides his feelings.