

DEAR ABBY / ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

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## Where Were You When JFK Died?

**D**EAR READERS: We've all experienced a moment in our lives that is literally unforgettable. If you were 4 years old or older, you will remember where you were when you heard the numbing news that President Kennedy had been assassinated. (I was in Tokyo, vacationing with my husband.)

Last year, I asked my readers to send me a postcard telling me where they were when they heard the shocking news. I wisely rented a post office box so these postcards would not get mixed up with the routine Dear Abby mail, but I was not prepared for the deluge that was to follow.

In the first two weeks, I received more than 300,000 postcards—plus long letters—from people who were eager to share their recollections.

Mail came in from small towns and major cities—from Alaska to the Philippines, from Berlin to Africa. The recollections were heartwarming: "I was Jack's roommate at Harvard," wrote one reader who is now in his 70s. Another wrote: "My folks had a framed picture of President Kennedy in our living room . . . next to the one of the Pope."

Although this was the beginning of a violent chapter in American history, the responses reflected a

less hectic time when children came home for lunch, their mothers ironed a lot, and families had black-and-white TV sets.

There were the inevitable theories of why and how—and a spattering of negative anecdotes, tales of "ESP" and premonitions—but the majority of the responses were moving tributes to our slain president.

Many of you wrote that you looked forward to reading what others were doing that fateful day, so I shared some of the responses in a Dec. 20, 1992, column, but it became clear that I had to share more of them. Thus, those recollections became a paperback book titled "Where Were You When President Kennedy Was Shot?" I asked Pierre Salinger, Kennedy's close friend and press secretary, if he would write the foreword. He accepted graciously without hesitation.

It's available in most bookstores, or from the publisher, Andrews and McMeel. Call (800) 913-ABBY, or write to: Abby's Kennedy Book, Andrews and McMeel, P.O. Box 419242, Kansas City, Mo. 64141.

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DEAR ABBY: The letter from "Another Kind of Child in San Francisco" brought back a fond memory. My mother, who lives in

Sweden, used to be very critical of all family members—but always behind their backs. Any relative who visited her had to listen to endless bad-mouthing of "what's wrong with so-and-so."

One day, one of her grandsons came for a visit. As soon as grandmother started her usual criticizing, he said: "Now, Grandma, you have 20 minutes to say nasty things about all the people I love, and then we're going to talk about pleasant things."

She was dumbfounded! She did not say anything at all for a full minute, and she never "used" her allotted 20 minutes to bad-mouth anybody.

As a matter of fact, after that, she changed dramatically, and today she's the sweetest 90-year-old lady you can imagine.

—J.R.T.

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DEAR ABBY: "Auntie J. in L.A." wrote to you saying that her nieces and nephews never wrote thank-you notes for the many gifts she had sent them. She blamed their parents for not having taught them better manners.

Abby, aunts can be teachers too. Her next gift should be a box of thank-you cards with self-addressed envelopes.

—W.G. IN L.A.

ABIGAIL VAN BUREN