

COVER STORY

JFK mystique gets replayed 25 years later



JFK: Family wants birth date marked, not death

By Laurence Jolidon
USA TODAY

Twenty-five years after that deadly day in Dallas, the assassination of John F. Kennedy still evokes questions — with no answers.

Who really shot the president? What would have become of us if the bullets had missed?

As in previous Novembers, this anniversary brings an onslaught of replayed and republished JFK nostalgia and — inevitably — refined theories of who really was behind the "crime of the century."

Public tributes this year pale in comparison with the 20th anniversary in 1983. The Kennedy family has made clear its preference to downplay the day of his death and instead focus on JFK's birthday, May 29.

But before November is over, in print and on TV we'll see a treasure of rare photos and home movies (some colorized) of our most photogenic president — and among our most popular. Not to mention almost enough vintage video to make us think TV sets are reverting to black and white.

The cascade of Kennedy-ana makes the words of Nellie Connally, wife of then-Gov. John Connally, resound decades later. In the innocence of those final, happy moments before the shots that changed history, she said, "Mr. President, you can't say Dallas doesn't love you."

Adding to the appeal for JFK buffs with thicker skins: the seemingly insoluble conspiracies and double-crosses suggested by expert and amateur sleuths.

This month's TV specials and new, hot-selling books — like *Contract on America* by David E. Scheim and *Mafia*

Please see COVER STORY next page ►

table savings on home or office delivery

COVER STORY

Plot is put to the test

Continued from 1A

Kingfish, the Life and Times of Carlos Marcello by John H. Davis — mine the evidence again and move the case against the Mafia a few steps further toward a guilty verdict.

In his account of the New Orleans connection, Davis says the case against Mafia godfather Marcello "is stronger than ever, but still not solid enough to be turned over to a grand jury."

The trail gets colder each year. What each new book seems to prove is that there are enough fuzzy photographs, murky characters and unanswerable questions to keep conspiracists in footnotes for another quarter-century.

Assuring us that we don't know the full story is a continuing clamp on classified documents gathered by the House Select Committee on Assassinations, which concluded conspiracies were behind the Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. killings.

The Justice Department, like the Warren Commission, found no conspiracy. A group of scholars is working to have the papers released, but thus far has failed.

TV producers have timed their raid on JFK material in the video vault for maximum November exposure.

► On PBS, Nova uses computer-enhanced photography to ask *Who Shot President Kennedy?* on Nov. 15.

► An edited version of a mock trial of Lee Harvey Oswald — with Geraldo Rivera as special prosecutor — replays in syndication on Nov. 22-23.

► In Wednesday night's *American Expose: Who Murdered JFK?* — syndicated nationally — investigative columnist Jack Anderson delves into how organized crime had the motive (revenge for a government crackdown) and the means (a "patsy" like Lee Harvey Oswald and a willing hood like Jack Ruby) to kill a president and cover it up.

Anderson puts the assassination film and photos under computer scrutiny, and promises shocking details to back the Mafia-hit scenario — including live interviews with an 82-year-old "witness" to the plot and Oswald's reclusive widow, Marina.

Viewers can call a 900 phone number to vote on whether to reopen the case. "It would just be to get history straight," says Anderson. "Obviously, you can't roll back anything now."

But the media roll back years with Kennedy nostalgia:

► *Life* magazine plans to reissue its November 1963 edition commemorating JFK's life and career.

► *JFK: In His Own Words*, premiering on HBO next Sunday, features rare audio and film of Kennedy in college, sailing, campaigning for office and playing with his kids.

► CBS Reports will present a two-hour special Nov. 17 of highlights of assassination and funeral coverage.

► NBC News will re-telecast six hours of its 1963 coverage — *JFK Assassination: As It Happened* — on Nov. 22, beginning at 1:56 p.m., the moment it broke in with the bulletin.

Another six-hour blockbuster — ABC's miniseries *The Kennedys of Massachusetts* — won't air until February.

The Kennedys are keeping public appearances to a minimum. Sen. Edward Kennedy plans a trip to Ireland this month, recalling JFK's 1963 visit.

Some relatives will attend a private dinner Wednesday in Washington, D.C., for about 80 veterans of the New Frontier. Mike Feldman, former White House counsel and dinner host, says he shares the Kennedy family's feeling "that what we ought to celebrate is his birthday."

But few dates are etched more deeply in the USA's history than Nov. 22, 1963. And memories of the life that ended that tragic day still mist a nation's eyes.

► In Cleveland, Tim McCormack, Cuyahoga County auditor,

has organized a Mass for public officials on Nov. 22 at St. John's Cathedral. Bishop Antony M. Pilla will preside.

"We want to recall a time when people didn't have to apologize for being idealistic," says McCormack.

▶ In Pittsburgh, the Allegheny Trails Council of Boy Scouts will dedicate an Eagle Scout induction ceremony to JFK, using the text of a letter Kennedy once wrote his father asking for money to pay his Scout dues.

▶ In Washington, D.C., veterans of the Peace Corps — a legacy of his presidency — will have a Mass at St. Matthew's Cathedral and stand a 24-hour vigil in the Capitol Rotunda ending at noon on Nov. 22.

▶ At Arlington Cemetery, outside the capital, an honor guard of Green Berets will lay a wreath at his grave, as they've done every Nov. 22 since the assassination.

▶ The John F. Kennedy Library in Cambridge, Mass., will open a Peace Corps exhibit on Nov. 20 and stage a Nov. 22 seminar featuring speakers who knew and served in government with Kennedy. A group of Boston-area high school and college students are invited, but mostly "it will be a quiet day of reflection and meditation," says spokesman Frank Rigg.

▶ In Dallas, where there's a small memorial to Kennedy, no official ceremonies are scheduled.

The former Texas School Book Depository is now mostly county offices. A private, non-profit assassination exhibit on the sixth floor, where Oswald drew a bead on the open convertible as it passed Dealey Plaza, was scheduled to open this month, but zoning delays have put it off until February.

"Looking back on such a tragic event is nothing anyone wants to do," says Lindalyn Adams of the Dallas County Historical Foundation. "But people have always come here seeking an understanding of what happened. And we realize we are caretakers of a site where history occurred. What happened here changed the world. We accept that now."