

November 27, 1963  
8:45 a.m.

Report of my participation in the activities surrounding  
the assassination of

PRESIDENT JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY

I awoke at 6:30 a.m. on November 22, 1963. At 7:00 a.m. I looked through the window in the hotel in Fort Worth, Texas which overlooked the parking lot in which provisions had been made for President Kennedy to address the public at 8:30 a.m. At that time there was a considerable gathering. It had been raining and most of the people were in raincoats and carried umbrellas. Mr. O'Donnell and Mr. O'Brien came into my room and also viewed the area from my window.

At 8:30 a.m. the day was overcast, but the rain had stopped. President Kennedy proceeded to the platform and addressed the very enthusiastic crowd. He then returned to the hotel and had breakfast during which he also made an address which was televised. Following this, he left by motorcade for the airport. The crowds along the road were very enthusiastic.

On arrival in Dallas, Texas there was a long motorcade. Mrs. Lincoln, the President's Secretary, and I were in what Mr. Behn called the VIP car, which followed

the cars containing the local and national representatives. The motorcade proceeded; the crowds on the roadway were overwhelming, large and enthusiastic past the main buildings. As we neared the viaduct, the crowds thinned out somewhat at the square and we made a right turn. As we were about to make this turn, something happened forward but we were not exactly aware what had happened, however, we did realize that something was wrong. Our motorcade then proceeded at a much more rapid rate and went to the Trade Mart. On arriving at the Mart, Chief Hendrix and I passed through the dining area and secured the aid of the Secret Service who had no knowledge of the exact whereabouts of the motorcade. Agent Burger commandeered a car and a police escort led us at a rapid rate to the hospital arriving there between three and five minutes following the arrival of the President.

I went directly to the Emergency Room on the ground floor of the hospital and Mrs. Kennedy was seated in a folding chair directly beside the door of the small room in which the President was being observed. I immediately entered the room, went to the head of the table and viewed the President. It was evident that death was imminent and that he was in a hopeless condition. Fluids had been started and he was being given extra cardiac

massage. The team was working to supply "O" Rh negative blood and I informed them that his blood group was "O" Ph positive. Due to the nature of the condition my direct services to him at that moment would have interfered with the action of the team which was in progress.

I went out in the corridor and spoke to Mrs. Kennedy. She expressed a desire to be in the room, realizing that death was imminent and that it was so right to be as close as she could, I overrode the protests of some of the people in the room and brought Mrs. Kennedy inside the door where she stood and with my arms protecting her, she momentarily rested her head on my shoulder. At one point she knelt in prayer for a few seconds and then arose and stood quietly. The cardiac pacemaker machine was brought in and was being prepared to be used, however, at this moment one of the doctors said there was no use as his life was gone, which I verified.

I told Mrs. Kennedy that the President was dead. She walked to the table, touched the foot and kissed the instep, then walked to the side of the table and felt his hand. The upper portion of his body was covered with a white cloth. A Priest, name is not known, was in the emergency room during this period and stepped forward and anointed the President and gave the last rites. I asked

him to recite the prayers for the dead, which he did and the response was made by Mrs. Kennedy and me. I then walked out of the room with Mrs. Kennedy, who again sat on the chair and expressed her desire to remain with the President's body continually until he was returned to the White House.

At this point, I stepped to someone and asked for the Superintendent of the hospital and with a Secret Service Agent ordered him to get with dispatch a conveyance and a casket to carry the body back to Washington. I spoke to Dr. Clark at this time who was the neurosurgeon in charge of the activity, and informed him that I would like the necessary papers and to expedite departure of the body from that area. At this time the medical examiner for the city of Dallas came in and I explained to him the necessity of quick action. He said that the remains could not be moved and that further examinations would have to be done there as this was a homicide case and they would have to go through procedures at that point. I informed him again that it was essential that we have him moved immediately as Mrs. Kennedy was going to stay exactly where she was until such movement was effected. With some difficulty, one of the local judges appeared and I asked him to make the necessary arrangements. After having called the local

sheriff on the phone, some confusion resulted in this delay. By that time the casket had arrived and the body was transferred to it.

I supervised the transfer and the room was vacated. Mrs. Kennedy proceeded to follow the casket. At this point, I again examined the room and they had cleaned the room. The roses which had been in the car with the President were in the wastebasket, however, and two roses which had broken off were lying on the floor. I picked them up and put them in my pocket. I then followed the cortege to the emergency room entrance and rode in the ambulance beside the coffin with Mrs. Kennedy sitting at the head of the coffin on the small chair. Clint Hill was with her; I can not remember exactly who else at this moment. On the way to the plane, we rode in silence for awhile. I then reached into the pocket and took out the roses I had gotten from the floor and gave them to Mrs. Kennedy stating what they were. She took them, put them in her jacket pocket, smiled and thanked me.

We arrived at the plane and the casket was carried by members of the Secret Service and some of the Air Force people to the Presidential compartment in which the chairs had been removed from one side, and the coffin placed in this area.

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 bullet used and compare this with future 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 decided 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

body was carried by the Secret Service and assisted by the members of the Air Force "1" 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 Landis 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 Humes and members of his staff. Also present were Admiral Kenny, Admiral Galloway, and Captain Canada. General McHugh 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 these occasions, Mrs. Kennedy spoke to me in the bedroom

of the suite expressing her appreciation which was greatly valued by us and which I will long remember. The body of the President was fully clothed 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 had been used to transport the body from Dallas had been mahogany colored and of metallic composition. This was replaced by a solid mahogany wooden casket. The casket was again placed in the United States Navy ambulance at Mrs. Kennedy's request and Mrs. Kennedy rode in the ambulance section with the Attorney General and Clint Hill. I accompanied the President's body back to the White House where it was taken immediately to the East Room and placed on a dais. On arrival, the guard was stationed and there were several priests who said prayers for the dead. Mrs. Kennedy then at the completion of these rites retired to the second floor.

I have no knowledge as to whether Mrs. Kennedy ever viewed the body after it left the hospital in Dallas.

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 wished to have this placed in the casket with the President's body.

/s/ George G. Burkley

Physician to the President