

Agent Who Drove Kennedy Car in Dallas Retires

Did Not Know the President Had Been Hit by Bullet

By **ROBERT B. SEMPLE Jr.**

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WASHINGTON, July 1—The handwriting on the card, simple and backward-sloping, conveys a message at once concise and poignant: "For Bill Greer—whom the President loved, and who was with him until the very end. Thank you."

The note, signed by Jacqueline Kennedy, is a cherished possession of William R. Greer, a 56-year-old Secret Service agent who was driving the limousine in which President Kennedy was killed on Nov. 22, 1963.

Mr. Greer retired yesterday from his job as Presidential chauffeur because of an ulcer condition that doctors believe was seriously aggravated by the tragedy.

Mr. Greer, a tall, handsome native of Ireland with a warm smile and even temperament, joined the Secret Service in 1945 and was assigned to drive Mr. Kennedy right after the inauguration. He drove for President Johnson until he was required to undergo stomach surgery last January.

Hazards of His Job

In an interview today at his comfortable but modest split-level home in a nearby Maryland subdivision, he recalled that day in Dallas, spoke briefly about Presidents he has served, and explained a few of the hazards Presidential drivers

face. "When the first shot was fired," he recalled, "I thought it was a sound I'd heard many times before—a motorcycle backfire. I glanced over my right shoulder and saw a red spot on [Texas Gov. John B.] Connally's shirt.

"I wasn't sure what had hap-



Associated Press Wirephoto

William R. Greer after announcing his retirement.

pened but I tramped on the accelerator. At about the same time Roy Kellerman [another agent in the car] yelled, 'we've been hit.'"

Mr. Greer says he did not know the President had been hit until the car reached Parkland Hospital, where he helped put Mr. Kennedy on a stretcher and carry him into the emergency room.

"We were going very fast and there was a lot of traffic around the Dallas Trade Mart, where the President had been scheduled to speak. I was too busy picking holes in it to look around," he explained.

Mr. Greer remained in the emergency room, then flew back to Washington with the body and the new President. He drove the Navy ambulance

Doctors Think Assassination Worsened Ulcer Condition

carrying the body from Andrews Air Force Base to Bethesda Naval Hospital and, later, drove the dead President to the White House, where his body lay in the East Room overnight.

There was hardly a moment in the first 12 hours after the assassination when Mr. Greer was not near Mr. Kennedy. He even watched the autopsy at Bethesda.

A 'Rough' Experience

"I was there mainly for professional reasons," he said. "We were looking for traces of lead or bullet fragments that might have helped us later on. It's nothing for a policeman to watch an autopsy. But this one was very rough."

Mr. Greer has kind words for all the chief executives he has served (the first was Harry S. Truman), but the one he knew best and felt the closest to was Mr. Kennedy.

"He made us all feel at home. He would stop and talk to us and kid a little bit and keep track of what we were doing. There was a waiting list to work at the White House in those days. He was a wonderful man, always laughing."

The pace quickened under Mr. Johnson. "There was a schedule in the old days but under Mr. Johnson we had to be ready to move at anytime. I'd be sitting in the garage at 22d and M [there is no garage at the White House] and then I'd get a call saying 'hustle on over, we're going to Texas.'"

Mr. Greer, who lives in Sea-brook, Md., is married and the father of an 19-year-old son, a student at the University of Maryland. He is looking forward now to playing golf. His annual retirement pay will be two-thirds of his \$12,900 salary as an agent.