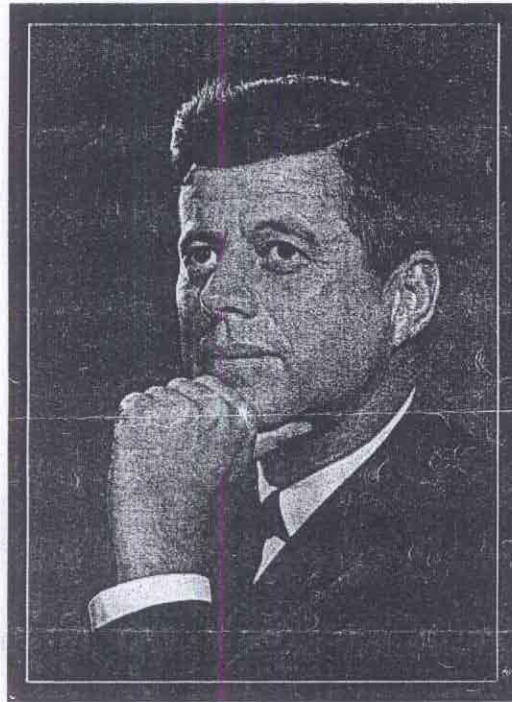


LIFE



All of LIFE's
Pictures and Text
on the Most Shocking
Event of Our Time

JOHN F. KENNEDY MEMORIAL EDITION

Including His Biography
and His Most Enduring Words

50¢

LIFE

It is all over now. The frightful moment has passed and what unfolded before the eyes of a nation has begun—such is nature's mercy—to recede. But stark images still crowd the mind. We remember the smiling young couple, and a bunch of red roses; then—the monstrous act itself; and then—a flag-decked caisson, bowed heads, a lovely widow's moving gestures, a new President's resolute face, an assassin's ironic end and a little son's salute. Yet even these memories, like those of every previous national tragedy,

would eventually fade into the dry pages of history, were it not for the camera's eye that recorded with immediacy and color the events of those 72 hours. And with this record, future generations shall also become privileged witnesses to the actual event, to be present and shaken and reawakened as we were.

We have devoted this edition to the memory of John F. Kennedy so that in days to come men and women may open these pages before their children and say this is how it was.

The President's Empty Chair

Seeing the President was, under Jack Kennedy, a relaxed visit. You might have had to wait around for a while in the anteroom or in his secretary's office (she was a friendly middle-aged lady with rimless spectacles), but eventually you were invited in. When this happened you got up from a simple straight-backed chair with a black-cushioned seat and walked into the Oval Office. Immediately you were conscious of the blue rug, the desk with light streaming in from the broad windows behind it, the naval paintings on the walls, the fireplace flanked on both sides by deep sofas upholstered in white. At the end of the sofas and facing the fireplace, with a wicker back and a seat with a cushion matching the sofas, stood the rocking chair.

The President's handshake was neither too hard nor too soft. It was gracious. He sat in the rocking chair and you sat on the sofa looking at him from the side. He was carefully but somewhat informally dressed, trousers sharply pressed and well-worn shoes well shined. His face had an everlasting tan, and he looked at you with head slightly cocked back and gray eyes glinting at you with an expression that combined interest, amusement and mischief.

President Kennedy was fascinated by the press. He played it quite frankly to enhance himself and his Administration. He read avidly and quickly and had a journalist's antennae out for the public pulse. So it was natural for him to ask me right away about LIFE's Nielsen rating. I didn't have the vaguest idea what it was, but he did—to the finest percentage point.

The subject changed quickly. A week before he had had his altercation with U.S. Steel. This got his anger up. The pointing finger waggled again and again to punctuate each point. He even picked up a magazine (not LIFE) and, to emphasize a point further, flung it across the room. It smacked against the wall, under a painting of a naval battle, and fell to the floor.

Then, in another mood, the President got up from his rocking chair and took me out through the French doors to his rose garden, of which he was very proud. The roses were not in bloom, but the tulips were blazing. He said that the gardens were a mess when he came to live in the White House. Now, it was true, they were beautiful. As the man talked you felt that he loved his garden, just as you knew, had you raced sailboats against him, that he loved the sea and that he loved to win a race.

All of us are sad that he is dead. I am particularly sad. I liked him as a man. He was a fine President. It is hard for me to forget one slight incident—one that revealed to me the guts he had. I knew, as we all did, that his back hurt. But I didn't realize how much until he took me over to a corner of his outer office to show me a hunting rifle he was going to present to a visiting head of state. It was in a brown cardboard carton standing in the corner. Bending over slightly, the President took apart the side of the carton and sidled the weapon out, holding the muzzle and sliding the butt across the floor. It weighed nine pounds, he said, but he couldn't even lift it. He asked me to help him and I did.

George P. Hunt

GEORGE P. HUNT *Managing Editor*

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By Theodore H. White

FOR PRESIDENT KENNEDY An

SHE remembers how hot the sun was in Dallas, and the crowds—greater and wilder than the crowds in Mexico or in Vienna. The sun was blinding, streaming down; yet she could not put on sunglasses for she had to wave to the crowd.

And up ahead she remembers seeing a tunnel around a turn and thinking that there would be a moment of coolness under the tunnel. There was the sound of the motorcycles, as always in a parade, and the occasional backfire of a motorcycle. The sound of the shot came, at that moment, like the sound of a backfire and she remembers Connally saying, "No, no, no, no, no. . . ."

She remembers the roses. Three times that day in Texas they had been greeted with the bouquets of yellow roses of Texas. Only, in Dallas they had given her red roses. She remembers thinking, how funny—red roses for me; and then the car was full of blood and red roses.

Much later, accompanying the body from the Dallas hospital to the airport, she was alone with Clint Hill—the first Secret Service man to come to their rescue—and with Dr. Burkley, the White House physician. Burkley gave her two roses that had slipped under the President's shirt when he fell, his head in her lap.

All through the night they tried to separate him from her, to sedate her, and take care of her—and she

would not let them. She wanted to be with him. She remembered that Jack had said of his father, when his father suffered the stroke, that he could not live like that. Don't let that happen to me, he had said, when I have to go.

Now, in her hand she was holding a gold St. Christopher's medal.

She had given him a St. Christopher's medal when they were married; but when Patrick died this summer, they had wanted to put something in the coffin with Patrick that was from them both; and so he had put in the St. Christopher's medal.

Then he had asked her to give him a new one to mark their 10th wedding anniversary, a month after Patrick's death.

He was carrying it when he died and she had found it. But it belonged to him—so she could not put that in the coffin with him. She wanted to give him something that was hers, something that she loved. So she had slipped off her wedding ring and put it on his finger. When she came out of the room in the hospital in Dallas, she asked: "Do you think it was right? Now I have nothing left." And Kenny O'Donnell said, "You leave it where it is."

That was at 1:30 p.m. in Texas.

But then, at Bethesda Hospital in Maryland, at 3 a.m. the next morning, Kenny slipped into the chamber where the body lay and brought her back the ring, which, as she talked now, she twisted.

On her little finger was the other ring: a slim, gold circlet with green emerald chips—the one he had given her in memory of Patrick.

Epilogue

THERE was a thought, too, that was always with her. "When Jack quoted something, it was usually classical," she said, "but I'm so ashamed of myself—all I keep thinking of is this line from a musical comedy.

"At night, before we'd go to sleep, Jack liked to play some records; and the song he loved most came at the very end of this record. The lines he loved to hear were: *Don't let it be forgot, that once there was a spot, for one brief shining moment that was known as Camelot.*"

She wanted to make sure that the point came clear and went on: "There'll be great Presidents again—and the Johnsons are wonderful, they've been wonderful to me—but there'll never be another Camelot again.

"Once, the more I read of history the more bitter I got. For a while I thought history was something that bitter old men wrote. But then I realized history made Jack what he was. You must think of him as this little boy, sick so much of the time, reading in bed, reading history, reading the Knights of the Round Table, reading Marlborough. For Jack, history was full of heroes. And if it made him this way—if it made him see the heroes—maybe other little boys will see. Men are such a combination of good and bad. Jack had this hero idea of history, the idealistic view."

But she came back to the idea that transfixed her: "*Don't let it be forgot, that once there was a spot, for one brief shining moment that was known as Camelot*—and it will never be that way again."

As for herself? She was horrified by the stories that she might live abroad. "I'm *never* going to live in Europe. I'm not going to 'travel extensively abroad.'

That's a desecration. I'm going to live in the places I lived with Jack. In Georgetown, and with the Kennedys at the Cape. They're my family. I'm going to bring up my children. I want John to grow up to be a good boy."

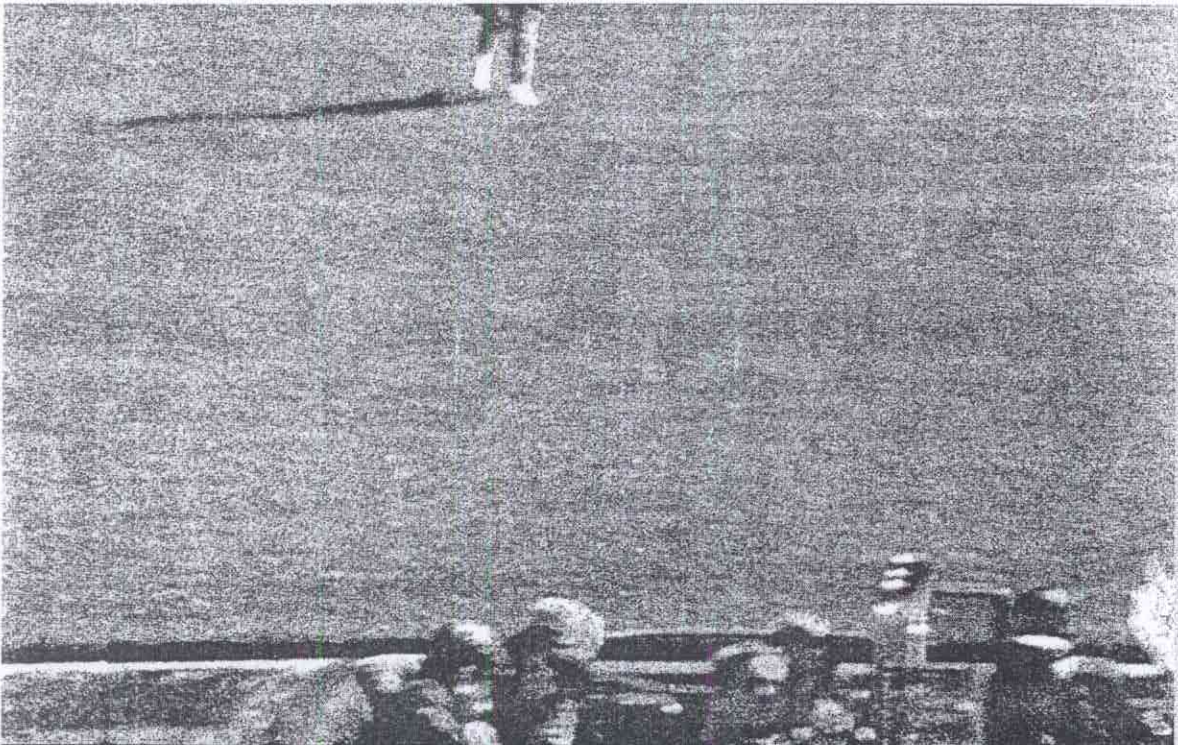
As for the President's memorial, at first she remembered that, in every speech in their last days in Texas, he had spoken of how in December this nation would loft the largest rocket booster yet into the sky, making us first in space. So she had wanted something of his there when it went up—perhaps only his initials painted on a tiny corner of the great Saturn, where no one need even notice it. But now Americans will seek the moon from Cape Kennedy. The new name, born of her frail hope, came as a surprise.

The only thing she knew she must have for him was the eternal flame over his grave at Arlington.

"Whenever you drive across the bridge from Washington into Virginia," she said, "you see the Lee Mansion on the side of the hill in the distance. When Caroline was very little, the mansion was one of the first things she learned to recognize. Now, at night you can see his flame beneath the mansion for miles away."

She said it is time people paid attention to the new President and the new First Lady. But she does not want them to forget John F. Kennedy or read of him only in dusty or bitter histories:

For one brief shining moment there was Camelot.



THIRD SHOT. Oswald's last bullet, fired at a range of more than 250 feet about two seconds after the shot which hit the governor, struck the President in the rear right part of his head (6). Mrs. Kennedy, only a few inches from being hit herself, shouted, "Oh no! Oh no!" and climbed toward the big rear deck of the Lincoln, desperately seeking help (7).

8



AID. Secret Service agent Clinton Hill jumped from the following car and rushed to catch the presidential car. As Mrs. Kennedy moved toward him he grabbed a handle and put a foot on the bumper (8). Mrs. Kennedy reached toward him as he climbed aboard (9), and the car sped toward the hospital, bearing the wounded governor—and the dead President.