



Pictured: Mary Ferrell Kerry McCarthy Debra Conway Tom Jones Amy Trauernicht

# KERRY McCARTHY'S SPEECH AT JFK LANCER AWARDS DINNER

11-22-97 DALLAS, TEXAS

**ROBERT CHAPMAN:** We have with us tonight, as a special guest speaker, a very distinguished individual from a very distinguished family. Kerry McCarthy is the first member of the Kennedy Family to come forward to an event of this nature: to embrace our aims, our goals, our efforts and to endorse the research and the effort that we are all doing on behalf of the memory of a member of her family.

She is, as I said, a very distinguished individual who hosts a TV talk show of her own in Saint Augustine, Florida for the Saint Augustine Daily News. She is a political historian. She is obviously a friend and relative of a President, Senators, Governors and other political individuals. She is someone who has worked on a local and a national scale for the Democratic Party and she is a much sought after guest and host for both radio and television programs, both locally and nationally. Would you all please welcome Ms. Kerry McCarthy.

**MCCARTHY:** Thank you Robert. I appreciate that. To all of you who were just up moments ago getting your awards and watching Clint take your photograph, it is just like one of our family get-togethers. We can never fit everyone into the photo. My thanks to all of you that did receive your awards. Your presentations have been remarkable in their scope, but most importantly their sincerity has touched my heart and that of my sisters. And if that means I have embraced the research committee, what the heck has taken the Kennedy's so long to do it.

Tonight, I first would want to thank each of you for being present. Because it is your presence that makes tonight most special. Your continued desire to find truth, or to understand history, and finally to demand

the very best of your government is an inspiration to each of us from around the nation who will one day finally thank you for your dedication. My delight in getting to know Debra is an extra benefit in having attended this conference. Because of her efforts and those of Tom Jones, thousands of people - as you well know - are informed on a daily basis through their Web site. And JFK Lancer is to be thanked for reaching out to those who need to know. My thanks, Debra.

To our Chairman, George Michael - he lends great import to this event because of his enthusiasm, his knowledge and his delight in life. George Michael - thank you for sharing this with us. And to finally meet Mary Ferrell, who has been a highlight of this weekend. She is truly the Dean of Research, as I have learned. But I knew that anyway. Mary - it is a pleasure to be in your company, truly. Thank you.

It has been delightful to meet Beverly, to meet Clint, to see the staff and the volunteers who have made this weekend possible through the work and the effort of JFK Lancer. Efforts to see the scholars who take the time to study the end of the journey that John Kennedy took on this earth.

To some of you it has been a beginning to find John Kennedy. To others it is thought of as his last moments here. But obviously he is destined not to leave us for many, many years. Especially while we still wonder who took him from us. I offer the respect that is so richly deserved to those of you in the research community and to all of my fellow speakers who have made the effort this weekend to remind us that a crime took place. To say to the conference attendees that I think you join me in thanking all of these people would be an understatement, for I see in your faces and in your demeanor a true belief that someday you will be a part of the solving of a crime referred too often to as the "crime of the century." Perhaps what is truly is the crime of the century is that Jack Kennedy was taken from us, and our world became more crime-ridden.

Perhaps his death led us to care less in our own lifetime. And in that respect his death has diminished each of us as well as this country. Now having made my sincere appreciation known to all of you, I must say that I wrote this speech before I noticed that Debra had put my picture from being seven years old in your program dressed in Halloween costume holding a JFK poster. Had I known, I probably would not have thanked Debra so profusely this evening for her efforts. But it is an indication of the involvement that my life has had in being a Kennedy. From the time that I could speak I was taught how to say, "Vote for my Cousin!" It didn't matter which cousin - we always had one running. And we continue that trend today, although there are some that I would not probably ask for your vote for at this point. Because we seem to be taking over the horizon of politics. And tonight although we are here to talk about a serious topic, I do ask that those of you that have shown your interest in this particular situation will also encourage the young people in your family to seek office. No matter what party. No matter what feeling you have. Because we will never solve the problem of a government that has not been honest with us - unless we replace the government in existence.

Debra has asked me to speak to you about the "man" Jack Kennedy. Not the loss of him. And I am delighted to do so and it is a pleasure for me. For although his murder happened when I was young, he had already made an impression on me. Our lives revolved around the phone calls, the note and the letters that came from the White House. And the constant TV broadcasts where my cousins smiling face, or sometimes his severe face, would appear on our TV screens. Now one thing that I must note is that Cousin Jack's news coverage never interrupted Roy Rogers or Captain Kangaroo, which were my favorite programs at the time. And luckily he never spoke during Dr. Kildare or a Beatles performance, for that could have been a serious conflict in the world of a seven-year-old. The Jack Kennedy that I know - from those images, from those quick glimpses of him, from him tussling the hair of those of us younger in the family, is the Jack Kennedy that I hoped would be with me in the years that I now enjoy.



For Jack Kennedy was an inheritant that we and my family were robbed of. We are a generation ill at ease with ourselves. Unsure of ourselves. And we represent a country of people my age that have been lost since he was taken from us. In admitting that, one has to admit that indeed his loss was important enough to change the life and the history of a nation. That is a very heavy statement, and one that would have made Jack Kennedy himself very nervous.

The delight that he brought to us was through his wit. In the family, it was his teasing ways. No brother could date a girl without Jack mentioning her attributes or her demeanor or her figure. No brother would date a girl without already having his arguments ready to present to Jack. He was a man who delighted in life only because he lived so close with death. To those who took him away - they could not have every truly understood that death was not a punishment to him - life was a reward that he never expected to have.

Jack has been hospitalized many times in his life. Receiving the last rights of our religion, Jack had a tendency to stick his tongue out at the world. Knowing full well that each day, each week, each month and eventually each year that he was granted was a gift that only he and his Maker understood. It is that Jack Kennedy that I would like to share with you. For I know about this man through those who loved him and lived with him. His Mother, Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy - my Great Aunt Rose - whom never until her last breath ceased thinking of him, remembering him and mourning him. And as for those of you here present this weekend and others at other conferences have talked about the rifle that may have been used in his death - it is the Rose Kennedy that I remember taking a magazine and opening it in front of me and saying, "This is so wrong." It was an advertisement in the back of a travel magazine stating, "Stronger than the one that killed Kennedy." It is her face turning to me and saying, "My beautiful son should never be used to advertise death". It is the importance of the work that you do. Not only to identify the gun that was used - the people that use them. But it is to make sure that those types of advertisements never appear in another magazine because of a death of another world leader.

It is through my Grandmother, Loretta Kennedy Connelly, Sister of Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy, Jack's Aunt and also his Godmother, that I know him. They shared a loving relationship all of his life. And she shared with me the stories and the remembrances that sometimes became so numerous that my mind would swirl with the images of conversations and events. This was a child that she held in her arms from the minute he arrived. There was a bond that formed between a sickly child and the Aunt that brought him chocolate cakes, right up until his experiences in the PT-109. It is that Jack Kennedy who was like a big brother to my mother, Mary Lou Connelly McCarthy, who was an only child, who relished her moments, her days with her big cousins Joe, and Jack, and Bobbie. She was 11 years younger than the President, and he referred to her as "little bit." She said to me one time, "If there is anything that you can do in life to remind people that Jack was a human - a loving man - then do it."

To those who say, "Why are you the only one that has spoken out?" To those of you that ask, "Why have you come to Dallas?" It is to remind you of that loss. Not the loss of a crime that has been unsolved, but a loss of a person - a family member. A man who was not there for me to see as I grew up. Of those years when he and his siblings were at their prime, my mother refers to them as the Golden Heroes of her youth. And in a way, they were that to all of us who are present today.

Some of you are young enough that you were not even alive when Jack was President. And some of you voted for him for the first time. And others of you never voted for him and never would have. But that is the wonder of our government. That is the wonder of Jack. For even years later, political friends such as Dave Powers would fill me in with fond memories, but say, "You know, he called the steel industry men an SOB." - said in silence as if it would somehow destroy my image of my cousin. To me, it delights me.



It shows a little bit of steel in a back that didn't give him a lot of peace. To call someone an "SOB" who is trying to injure the country was a good thing in our President. So I do not seem him as "perfection." But I do see him in the eyes of those who loved him. I see him because his family loved him and with all his human foibles and faults, that took pride in him for his humor and for his gifts.

For over three decades now, the family has asked that Jack be remembered on his birthday, May 29. And in Boston, often we gather in large numbers to do just that: to celebrate his life, and that is fine - for his life deserves to be remembered. But it would be impossible for this country to forget November 22, 1963 and what must be remembered by those who are not with us today is that President Kennedy's death demands reflection as well as his life does. For those of you that gather on this date you honor him as much as those that choose May as the date to honor him. It is fitting that we gather in Dallas this weekend, for it is in Dallas that he will ever be associated. The majority of you in this audience are of the research community, and in your work, in some cases your life's work, I understand. This assassination work has become a tribute, in effect, to his life - and I am keenly aware of that. He loved history and he loved literature. And you, too, through your work, I feel sure we would have his appreciation for the research that you do to bring history into focus and to present that history into factual terms. If Jack Kennedy had not have gone into politics he would have remained a writer. He would have continued a career in literature. And to see those of you publishing your ideas and your thoughts and your theories in an event such as this I think is a fine tribute to a man who inspired people to think - but a man who worshiped ideas. His own Profiles In Courage told us of people who got into positions who were scared - the most remarkable thing they did was to not quit. And I urge you tonight: Do not quit in the work that you do. For we need you.

I see the parallels of the work that you present. And I see the friendships that have developed listening to some of you in the hall greeting one another. For you have a life that is unknown to many of us. You have a life filled with facts and figures, trajectories and understanding of facts that we have not been privy to. Even though in hushed tones in my family scenarios have been discussed and rumors have been flowing. There were times when Bobby's depression and sadness over his brother's death brought out conversations--perhaps feelings of guilt. So I may know things said and overheard by a child that may be different from that you know. But what we all know is: None of us know it all yet.

There is destined to be doubt in America. And even if the truth is ever told - from the animation and the program that was presented this morning to the discussions that resulted in three days of work - we will probably not even know the truth when it is presented to us because we have for so long wondered if it would ever be given to us. But the truth is that the work that you do - that the truth that you know is important even if there are varying ideas, even if there is a dissention of agreement. The truth that you know is that you care. His death was not an act of anger. It was a premeditated murder of our nation's leader. Motivated for very specific reasons and benefiting those that ordered it. The people of this nation know that. And they still hope for answers. They are a trusting lot, and we are part of that group.

My sister, Cheryl, whose career is in the medical world, often compares what happened to this country on November 22nd to the shock and trauma of war experiences - and now I wonder if perhaps she isn't more correct then I realize. Because our nation does seem to have been in a state similar to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Look at our society. Mary and I spoke of it earlier. Courtesy is hard to find. Civility is almost impossible to find. We see the symptoms of detachment and inability to develop relationships with others. A depression, distress, and sometimes even a feeling of helplessness which has led our country to manifest these problems into anger, and violence, and self-centered behavior whose only indication is self-concern.



I believe, as my sister first stated to me a few years ago, that our belief system was destroyed in front of our eyes. We must take it back and the one thing you can believe in is yourself. Jack's death never took us away from us. It only took him away. It took away the role of a government that most of you were raised to trust. Your responsibility was to be citizens who met the criteria of citizenship: decent, caring, honest. The type of people grew up in this room where doors were unlocked, and Jack's death was more of a death knell to that lifestyle then even to his own life. That is why the symptoms and the syndromes of this country have suffered under may indeed be healed by the work that you do, and that healing process will involve open discussions, displays of emotions which are thought of as natural, not unnatural. There should be emotion in life. Without it we are cardboard and two-dimensional. The remembrances that we share, such as those that can be found on Web sites throughout the Internet, including those of our friend Cheryl Overland, JFK Lancer, and the chat rooms for college students that can express their emotions about a man that did not even live during their life time. They encourage and encompass the honesty of discussion which was a delight to a man who became President. And it is one of my saddest reflections on his life - that his death has taken some of that from this country.

If the final analysis, it will depend on us for only we will decide what JFK death's meant to each of us. We will never probably know that absolute truth. But I hope - and perhaps that is the message I bring you tonight - that hope is still a possibility. Since that day 34 years ago, that event robbed us of what might have been. And I feel strongly that that fact - more than anything else - is what haunts us: What might have been. In the educators and the students that are honored tonight, JFK would have been delighted to be associated in both Bruce and Amy, and all of the finalists. We find that cooperation of roles between educator and student. Both of tonight recipients represent the best and they possess a desire to continue to teach and a continuing effort to learn.



In the speech that my cousin was to deliver in the Trade Mart, many people mention the fact that he was to talk about the defense of this nation. But he began the speech, although not ever able to deliver it, with the words that told us that education and learning are the tools to the greatest defense of any nation. In Amy and Bruce, in the honor that they have presented, we are still recognizing those thoughts from 34 years ago. In Jack's life, he came to depend on a bright mind for often his body was not his friend. In the years that he lay in bed, sick with fevers and injuries and diseases, he was always aware that his body may fail him. But his active bright mind and his curiosity was his greatest ally. In that in spirit I challenge those that you honor tonight to continue to inspire others to appreciate bright minds. In the years spent with that illness and pain, Jack Kennedy challenged himself to learn, to read to comprehend. The research committee here tonight shows to me that same determination. You must overcome obstacles, and you must trust that the learning you share is appreciated. As we examine John Kennedy, we can not see the man he was without understanding that he was multi-faceted. And in the authors who now says that he was a wart hog in his personal behavior - they have never slept in a bed that Jack Kennedy slept in which sounds like this [Kerry twice raps the wooden podium soundly]. He slept on a piece of wood. To have him be the worlds greatest Lothario would have been a miracle - ladies and gentlemen. This is a man who not only never slept a whole night's sleep, if any of you in the out their in the room thinks that sound is particularly good to love making you are mistaken. He would be delighted to be thought of as the Errol Flynn of his era. And then he would have been angry, because it takes away from what he truly accomplished. Did he like the ladies? Yes. Did he find bright, fascinating people a challenge and a



delight? Yes. Would many of you in this room, possibility, have been a friend? I think so. He would have, liked that many of you are published. All of you are considerate. And most of you are egotistical enough to match my cousin. As am I.

The Jack Kennedy that I want you to leave with tonight is not the man whose eyes showed the fright that day 34 years ago. He was bright. He knew what was happening to them. He knew he would be gone. You can look at the Zapruder films or anything else you want and look for his blue eyes that tells you in his reaction that he knew it was over. And to those who say he led a life filled with illusion, remember the words of his wife as he died: "Jack, I love you."

Come away from this weekend with a new understanding of the man he was. The man who said to his mother in Hyannisport on the way to meet with Kruschew, "I don't feel good. I don't want to go." She responded with, "Don't be a sissy, get up stairs and get dressed."

He was the man compassionate enough that my mother as a college student got the flu in the early evening hours, and Jack, whose room backed to hers, heard her moaning and went in, as an young congressman, and held her hand - having brought ice packs and aspirin and told her stories. And told her old Irish tales. And in the morning, in his usual, urbane, isolated way said, "Hi cousin, it looks like you are going to live," and walked by. Because God forbid anybody knew from the rest of the family that he had spent eight hours nursing a young cousin.

To Dave Powers, whose favorite story I share with you tonight. When the President gave him a certificate on his birthday, engraved and done by the White House printing office. Dave, who also shares an ego with all of us, said to me, "I looked at the gold-embossed certificate, and I thought, 'I've arrived. I am the confidant and the friend of a President'." He said, "As I opened it from the envelope, I realized that the certificate was not from a grateful nation as I has hoped. It was a certificate noting that I was the presidential advisor who took the most Heinekens from his private stock." What Dave Powers also mentioned is that the certificate has "Heineken" spelled wrong. When he pointed it out to the President. Jack became enraged and said, "Well, damn, just because I'm President doesn't mean they shouldn't check my spelling. I can lead the world, I just can't spell many words."

It is a hopeful thing to all of us, that one does not have to be perfection to be remembered. One does not have to die violently to be remembered. But in the violent death that you examine over and over again - look for the person. Don't forget him. For in so doing so you would negate his importance. You would negate your own work as well.

Lord Tweedsmuir was a favorite writer of Jack's. And his favorite quote was the one that he said to Bobby the day before he left for Dallas thirty-four years ago. Bob was complaining that you shouldn't have to go and do these political duties. "You are a President and those duties are enough." Jack smiled and said, "But Bob, '64 is coming and I can't wait."

And he couldn't. He said remember my quote from Tweedsmuir, Bobby: "Politics is a noble adventure." He slapped him on the back, walked out the door, and his younger brother never saw him again. I challenge you tonight to also live your adventure. For I feel yours, too, is as noble as politics, and I feel that if we should never see one other again - the challenge to each other to live that noble adventure is the greatest tribute we could pay to a man who came our way.

God Bless you all, and thank you for having me here.

- Kerry McCarthy

November 22, 1997

BACK TO NOVEMBER IN DALLAS 97

KERRY MCCARTHY was born to Marylou and Matthew McCarthy shortly after the Korean War. And into one of America's most politically involved families. Her grandmother, Loretta Kennedy Connelly, was the sister of Joseph P. and Margaret Kennedy. Loretta was her older brother's favorite, and he named her as his son, John Fitzgerald Kennedy's godmother. Loretta and Joe's father was Senator P.J. Kennedy of Massachusetts, a second generation Irish Immigrant, who began the political dynasty. Kerry was named for her great uncle Joe's daughter Kathleen, nicknamed Kick, who had died during WW II.

Kerry's cousins, Jack, Bobby, and Teddy, are a special part of Kerry's life. Her first campaign was for Jack when he ran for the Presidency. She learned politics at the family home in Hyannis, where both she and her brother Kevin assisted with Teddy's campaigns. Kerry became her Aunt Rose's favorite companion, accompanying her on her daily beach walks, listening to the family history and learning the art of politics.

Always a Democrat, Kerry has worked on numerous campaigns and held many elected offices in the Democratic Party. Well known statewide as well as nationally, Kerry is an oft sought after speaker for political fund-raisers and conventions and was named an Outstanding American Women in 1979.

A long-time radio show talk show host and TV personality, Kerry is sought after by national TV such as Geraldo "Live", Entertainment Tonight, and the A&E Network's "Biography," for her candor and wit. She hosts a TV talk show, The St. Augustine Daily News with monthly political updates by her friend, U.S. Senator Bob Graham of Florida.

A political historian, friend and relative of Presidents, Senators, Governors, members of Congress, and First Ladies, Kerry brings her sense of humor, as well as leadership qualities and insights to the political process. Kerry and her sister Cheryl Knapp are the first Kennedy family members to attend a JFK Conference.