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WARREN-MRS. JOHNSON (1,000)

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23 NOV 1964

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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WASHINGTON, NOV. 23 (AP)-FOR MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON, THE MOST POIGNANT MOMENT OF THE DAY JOHN F. KENNEDY WAS ASSASSINATED CAME WHEN SHE SAW MRS. KENNEDY--"THAT IMMACULATE WOMAN"--IN A STAINED DRESS WITH HER GLOVES CAKED WITH HER HUSBAND'S BLOOD.

THE NEW FIRST LADY SAID TO JACQUELINE KENNEDY, "YOU KNOW WE NEVER EVEN WANTED TO BE VICE PRESIDENT AND NOW, DEAR GOD, IT'S COME TO THIS."

MRS. JOHNSON, SOON AFTER THE TRAGEDY, DICTATED HER IMPRESSIONS INTO A TAPE RECORDER "PRIMARILY AS A FORM OF THERAPY--TO HELP ME OVER THE SHOCK AND HORROR."

WHEN THE PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION HEADED BY CHIEF JUSTICE EARL WARREN BEGAN ITS INVESTIGATION, THE FIRST LADY SENT THE COMMISSION A TRANSCRIPT OF WHAT SHE HAD DICTATED. THIS WAS INCLUDED WITH THE DETAILED TESTIMONY NOT IMMEDIATELY PUBLISHED WHEN THE COMMISSION'S REPORT WAS ISSUED SEPT. 27. A COPY OF THE TRANSCRIPT NOW HAS BEEN OBTAINED BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS.

MRS. JOHNSON DESCRIBED THE BEGINNING OF THE MOTORCADE IN DALLAS, COMMENTING, "IT ALL BEGAN SO BEAUTIFULLY" IN FINE WEATHER. SHE AND THE THEN VICE PRESIDENT RODE TWO CARS BEHIND THE PRESIDENTIAL AUTOMOBILE. HER ACCOUNT CONTINUED:

". . . WE WERE ROUNDING A CURVE, GOING DOWN A HILL, AND SUDDENLY THERE WAS A SHARP LOUD REPORT--A SHOT. IT SEEMED TO ME TO COME FROM THE RIGHT, ABOVE MY SHOULDER, FROM A BUILDING. THEN A MOMENT AND THEN TWO MORE SHOTS IN RAPID SUCCESSION. THERE HAD BEEN SUCH A GALA AIR THAT I THOUGHT IT MUST BE FIRECRACKERS OR SOME SORT OF CELEBRATION. THEN, IN THE LEAD CAR, THE SECRET SERVICE MEN WERE SUDDENLY DOWN.

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"I HEARD OVER THE RADIO SYSTEM, 'LET'S GET OUT OF HERE,' AND OUR SECRET SERVICE MAN WHO WAS WITH US, RUF (RUFUS) YOUNGBLOOD, I BELIEVE IT WAS, VAULTED OVER THE FRONT SEAT ON TOP OF LYNDON, THREW HIM TO THE FLOOR AND SAID, 'GET DOWN.'

"SEN. YARBOROUGH AND I DUCKED OUR HEADS. THE CAR ACCELERATED TERRIFICALLY FAST--FASTER AND FASTER. THEN SUDDENLY THEY PUT ON THE BRAKES SO HARD THAT I WONDERED IF THEY WERE GOING TO MAKE IT AS WE WHEELED LEFT AND WENT AROUND THE CORNER. WE PULLED UP TO A BUILDING. I LOOKED UP AND SAW IT SAID 'HOSPITAL.' ONLY THEN DID I BELIEVE THAT THIS MIGHT BE WHAT IT WAS. YARBOROUGH KEPT ON SAYING IN AN EXCITED VOICE, 'HAVE THEY SHOT THE PRESIDENT?' I SAID SOMETHING LIKE, 'NO; IT CAN'T BE.' . . .

(THE OCCUPANTS OF THE VICE PRESIDENTIAL CAR GOT OUT.)

"I CAST ONE LAST LOOK OVER MY SHOULDER AND SAW, IN THE PRESIDENT'S CAR, A BUNDLE OF PINK, JUST LIKE A DRIFT OF BLOSSOMS, LYING ON THE BACK SEAT. I THINK IT WAS MRS. KENNEDY LYING OVER THE PRESIDENT'S BODY. . . .

(THE JOHNSONS WENT INTO THE HOSPITAL. PEOPLE CAME AND WENT.)

"THOUGH IT ALL, LYNDON WAS REMARKABLY CALM AND QUIET. EVERY FACE THAT CAME IN, YOU SEARCHED FOR THE ANSWERS YOU MUST KNOW, I THINK THE FACT I KEPT SEEING IT ON WAS THE FACE OF KENNEDY O'DONNELL, WHO LOVED HIM SO MUCH.

"IT WAS LYNDON AS USUAL WHO THOUGHT OF IT FIRST, ALTHOUGH I WASN'T GOING TO LEAVE WITHOUT DOING IT. HE SAID, 'YOU HAD BETTER TRY TO SEE IF YOU CAN SEE JACKIE AND NELLIE' (WIFE OF GOV. JOHN B. CONNALLY OF TEXAS, WHO WAS SERIOUSLY WOUNDED). WE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO JOHN. I ASKED THE SECRET SERVICE MEN IF I COULD BE TAKEN TO THEM. THEY BEGAN TO LEAD ME UP ONE CORRIDOR, BACK STAIRS, AND DOWN ANOTHER.

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WASHINGTON--

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WASHINGTON--1ST ADD WARREN-MRS. JOHNSON A133 XXX ANOTHER.

"SUDDENLY I FOUND MYSELF FACE TO FACE WITH JACKIE IN A SMALL HALL. I THINK IT WAS RIGHT OUTSIDE THE OPERATING ROOM. YOU ALWAYS THINK OF HER--OR SOMEONE LIKE HER--AS BEING INSULATED, PROTECTED; SHE WAS QUITE ALONE. I DON'T THINK I EVER SAW ANYONE SO MUCH ALONE IN MY LIFE. I WENT UP TO HER, PUT MY ARMS AROUND HER AND SAID SOMETHING TO HER. I'M SURE IT WAS SOMETHING LIKE, 'GOD, HELP US ALL,' BECAUSE MY FEELINGS FOR HER WERE TOO TUMULTUOUS TO PUT INTO WORDS.

"AND THEN I WENT IN TO SEE NELLIE. THERE IS WAS DIFFERENT BECAUSE NELLIW AND I HAVE GONE THROUGH SO MANY THINGS TOGETHER SINCE 1938. I HUGGED HER TIGHT AND WE BOTH CRIED AND I SAID, 'NELLIE, IT'S GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT.' AND NELLIE SAID, 'YES, JOHN'S GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT.' AMONG HER MANY OTHER FINE QUALITIES, SHE IS ALSO TOUGH.

"THEN I TURNED AND WENT BACK TO THE SMALL WHITE ROOM WHERE LYNDON WAS. MR. (MALCOLM KILDUFF (ASSISTANT PRESIDENTIAL PRESS SECRETARY) AND KENNEY O'DONNELL WERE COMING AND GOING. I THINK IT WAS KENNY'S FACE AND KENNY'S VOICE THAT I FIRST HEARD THE WORDS, 'THE PRESIDENT IS DEAD.'

MR. KILDUFF ENTERED AND SAID TO LYNDON, 'MR. PRESIDENT.' . . .

(THE JOHNSONS WENT TO THE AIRPORT.)

"I LOOKED UP AT A BUILDING AND THERE ALREADY WAS A FLAG AT HALF-MAST. I THINK THAT IS WHEN THE ENORMITY OF WHAT HAD HAPPENED FIRST STRUCK ME. . . .

(ARRANGEMENTS WERE MADE FOR JOHNSON TO TAKE THE OATH OF OFFICE AS PRESIDENT.)

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"MRS. KENNEDY HAD ARRIVED BY THIS TIME AND THE COFFIN, AND THERE-- IN THE VERY NARROW CONFINES OF THE PLANE WITH JACKIE ON HIS LEFT WITH HER HAIR FALLING IN HER FACE, BUT VERY COMPOSED, AND THEN LYNDON, AND I WAS ON HIS RIGHT, JUDGE (SARAH) HUGHES WITH THE BIBLE IN FRONT OF HER AND A CLUSTER OF SECRET SERVICE PEOPLE A

DON, AND I WAS ON HIS RIGHT, JUDGE (SARAH) HUGHES WITH THE BIBLE IN FRONT OF HER AND A CLUSTER OF SECRET SERVICE PEOPLE AND THE CONGRESSMEN WE HAD KNOWN FOR A LONG TIME--LYNDON TOOK THE OATH OF OFFICE. . .

"WE ALL SAT AROUND THE PLANE. WE HAD AT FIRST BEEN USHERED INTO THE MAIN PRIVATE PRESIDENTIAL CABIN ON THE PLANE--BUT LYNDON QUICKLY SAID, 'NO, NO,' AND IMMEDIATELY LED US OUT OF THERE; WE FELT THAT IS WHERE MRS. KENNEDY SHOULD BE. THE CASKET WAS IN THE HALL. I WENT IN TO SEE MRS. KENNEDY AND, THOUGH IT WAS A VERY HARD THING TO DO, SHE MADE IT AS EASY AS POSSIBLE.

"SHE SAID THINGS LIKE, 'OH, LADY BIRD IT'S GOOD WE'VE ALWAYS LIKED YOU TWO SO MUCH.' SHE SAID, 'OH, WHAT IF I HAD NOT BEEN THERE? I'M SO GLAD I WAS THERE.'

"I LOOKED AT HER. MRS. KENNEDY'S DRESS WAS STAINED WITH BLOOD. HER RIGHT GLOVE WAS CAKED--THAT IMMACULATE WOMAN--IT WAS CAKED WITH BLOOD, HER HUSBAND'S BLOOD. SHE ALWAYS WORE GLOVES LIKE SHE WAS USED TO THEM. I NEVER COULD. SOMEHOW THAT WAS ONE OF THE MOST POIGNANT SIGHTS, EXQUISITELY DRESSED AND CAKED IN BLOOD. I ASKED HER IF I COULDN'T GET SOMEONE TO HELP HER CHANGE, AND SHE SAID, 'OH, NO. PERHAPS LATER I'LL ASK MARY GALLAGHER (A SECRETARY), BUT NOT RIGHT NOW.'

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"SHE SAID A LOT OF OTHER THINGS, LIKE, 'WHAT IF I HAD NOT BEEN THERE? OH, I'M SO GLAD I WAS THERE,' AND A LOT OF OTHER THINGS THAT MADE IT MUCH EASIER FOR US. . .

"I TRIED TO EXPRESS SOMETHING OF HOW WE FELT. I SAID, 'OH, MRS. KENNEDY, YOU KNOW WE NEVER EVEN WANTED TO BE VICE PRESIDENT AND NOW, DEAR GOD, IT'S COME TO THIS. . . .'

"(SHE REMEMBERED) SOMETHING I HAD SAID ABOUT LYNDON A LONG TIME AGO--THAT HE'S A GOOD MAN IN A TIGHT SPOT. I EVEN REMEMBER ONE LITTLE THING HE SAID IN THAT HOSPITAL ROOM, 'TELL THE CHILDREN TO GET A SECRET SERVICE MAN WITH THEM.'"

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