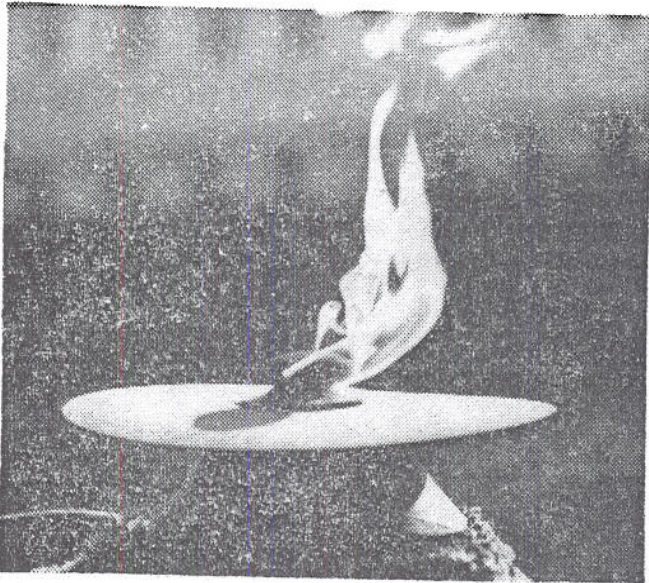


A Reverent Vigil Beside The Eternal Flame



ETERNAL FLAME BURNS OVER KENNEDY GRAVE
Site is still visited by countless persons.—(AP)

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sometimes the visitors come in military cadence, or with the quick and happy step of young school children, or in the contemplative way of the thoughtful citizen.

They still throng to the grave of John F. Kennedy, assassinated in Dallas three years ago today.

By count and estimate, more than 16 million persons have climbed the grassy slopes of Arlington National Cemetery to the graves of President Kennedy and two of his children.

50,000 A DAY

In the first few weeks there were more than 50,000 a day.

Now there about 15,000 daily, but a pleasant Indian summer or spring day, or a holiday will draw many more thousands.

Visitors often wait an hour or two in line.

Not long ago wreath-laying ceremonies were averaging 15 a day.

A new granite and marble memorial authorized by Congress is nearing completion.

The simple grave, outlined by a low white picket fence, stands today in sharp contrast to the gleaming marble of the new memorial a few feet away.

The new site, to which the bodies of Kennedy and his two children who died in infancy will be moved next spring, includes a circular walkway, more than 200 feet across and an inscription wall of granite upon which are engraved quotations from the Kennedy Inaugural speech of Jan. 20, 1961.

ETERNAL FLAME

The eternal flame lighted by Kennedy's widow during the burial service will be moved to the new site and remain a central symbol.

The light has gone out on occasion since the burial but the new one to be installed in the memorial has been tested in hurricane force wind and simulated rain storms.

John Carl Warnecke, the architect who designed the memorial, attempted to keep it as simple as the expenditure of more than \$2 million permitted.

A gray slate marker set flush with the ground will identify the President's grave and those of the children—Patrick Bouvier Kennedy and a baby girl.

The President's marker will be engraved with the words: "John Fitzgerald Kennedy," 1917-1963."

The eternal flame may be seen on a clear night from the Lincoln Memorial, perhaps a

mile or more across the Potomac River.

EMOTION HINTS

In its new location, the grave and the flickering flame will be in a straight line from the Lincoln Memorial to the Custis Lee

Mansion at the crest of the hill overlooking the cemetery.

The mansion was built in 1802 by George Washington Parke Custis, adopted grandson of President George Washington.

Thousands of mementos have been tossed upon Kennedy's grave in the three years since the assassination.

They give some hint of the moods of the people who visit the grave and the emotions that stir them.

A baby's shoe, a religious medal, a scarlet flower, berets and caps of military men, a torn page from a Bible with a marked passage were part of one day's offerings.

The mementos are gathered daily, packed and sent to the White House.

The great and the famous, kings and emperors, the ordinary and the obscure citizens of the world have been drawn to the grave.

What brings them? Many motives.

CHILDREN COME

A bus load of children arrives on its Washington sightseeing tour. They pile out laughing and chattering with cameras dangling on their arms.

A group of nuns makes the walk around the grave, solemn and silent.

A cluster of businessmen, taking time out from a convention, arrives.

They talk casually among themselves but stop for a moment in silence.

A woman came to the grave in a heavy downpour of rain.

She told a cemetery worker: "I came all the way from Canada to see this grave and no

rain is going to stop me now, or anything else."

Another visitor, asked what had drawn him to the grave, said of Kennedy: "He was a man of grace. He died too young, too needlessly. That has haunted me ever since he was killed.

"I wanted to come and see the place where he is buried."

Most of those coming alone appear thoughtful or sad as they reach the grave.

Many shed a tear.