

A Wife's Cry of Horror

Washington

A shot rang out, then another. Mrs. John F. Kennedy cried out: "Oh, my God, they have shot my husband. I love you, Jack."

Moments before, she had been waving to the cheering crowds lining the sunny Dallas street. The report released yesterday by the Warren Commission on the Kennedy assassination describes what happened.

"Soon after the motorcade turned onto Elm street, (Mrs. Kennedy) heard a sound similar to a motorcycle noise and a cry from Governor (John B.) Connally, which caused her to look to her right," the report states.

IMPACT

"On turning, she saw a quizzical look on her husband's face as he raised his left hand to his throat. Mrs. Kennedy then heard a second shot and saw the President's skull torn open under the impact of the bullet."

It was seconds later, as she cradled her wounded husband in her arms, that Mrs. Kennedy made her outcry.

The report notes that Mrs. Kennedy had no recollection of the horror-filled minutes that followed—minutes in which, according to one witness, she very nearly met death.

What happened in those minutes was described for the commission by Clinton J. Hill, a Secret Service agent who had been riding on the left running board of the followup car.

SHOT

Noticing that the President had lurched forward, Hill testified, he jumped from his car and ran to the Presidential limousine, just as a second shot was fired.

"At the instant that Hill stepped onto the left rear step of the President's automobile and grasped the handhold," the report continued, "the car lurched forward, causing him to lose his footing. He ran three or four steps, regained his position and mounted the car."

The report then quoted Hill as testifying:

"Mrs. Kennedy had jumped up from the seat and was, it appeared to me, reaching for something coming off the right rear bumper of the car, the right rear tail, when she noticed I was trying to climb on the car."

DANGER

"She turned towards me and I grabbed her and put her back in the back seat, crawled up on the top of the back seat and lay there."

David F. Powers, a presidential aide riding in the followup car, later told the commission that "Mrs. Kennedy would probably have fallen off the rear end of the car and been killed if Hill had not pushed her back into the presidential automobile."

Mrs. Kennedy, the report continued, "had no recollection of climbing onto the back of the car."

The exact testimony given by Mrs. Kennedy to the Commission has not been released. Her ten-minute-long testimony, along with that of other witnesses, will be made public later.

HOSPITAL

The report describes the race through Dallas streets, at 70 to 80 miles an hour, to the Parkland Memorial Hospital, four miles from where the President was shot. Telling of the scene there, the report says:

"For a moment, Mrs. Kennedy refused to release the President, whom she held in her lap, but then (three Secret Service agents) lifted the President onto a stretcher and pushed it into trauma room 1."

A medical report submitted to the Commission by doctors at the hospital said:

"The President's wife refused to take off her bloody gloves and clothes. She did take a towel and wipe her face. She took her wedding ring off and placed it on one of the President's fingers."

WATCHING

While doctors tried to save the President's life, "Mrs. Kennedy alternated between watching them and waiting outside," the report continued.

Then, after the President was pronounced dead, the report stated, Kenneth O'Donnell, a presidential aide, "tried to persuade Mrs. Kennedy to leave the area, but she refused. She said that she intended to stay with her husband."

O'Donnell advised Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson to return to Washington immediately, the report went on, but "then told that Mrs. Kennedy refused to leave without the President's body, the vice president said he would not leave Dallas without her."

The coffin containing the body of the President was then placed aboard the presidential plane that had brought the Kennedys to Texas the day before.

OATH

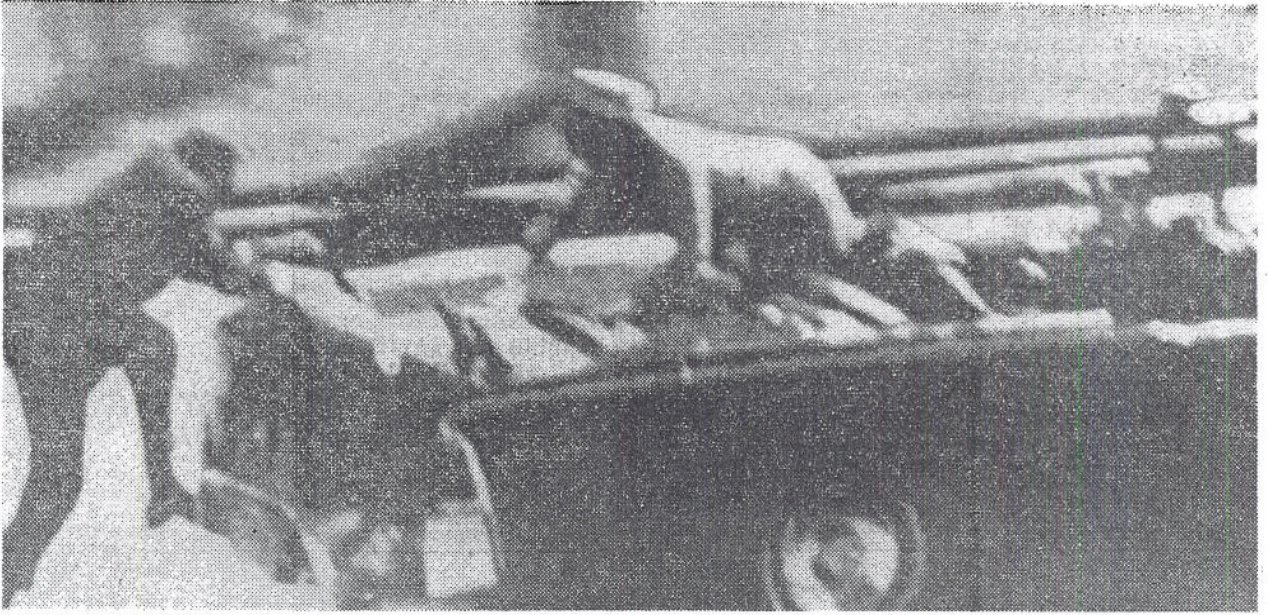
Mr. Johnson took the oath of office as President, Mrs. Kennedy standing by his side, and the plane headed for Washington.

Mrs. Kennedy's day of horror had begun with a strangely prophetic conversation in a hotel in Fort Worth. It ended in a lonely vigil at Bethesda Naval Hospital, where an autopsy was being performed on the dead President.

Just that morning, the commission report noted, President Kennedy and his wife and O'Donnell had been talking about the risks involved in presidential public appearances.

"According to O'Donnell," the report went on, "the President commented that 'If anybody really wanted to shoot the President of the United States, it was not a very difficult job—all one had to do was get a high building someday with telescopic rifle, and there was nothing anybody could do to defend against such an attempt.'"

New York Times



Mrs. Kennedy reached over the rear of the car as the Secret Service man rushed to it