

THE MURDER OF MARY PINCHOT MEYER

Socialite, mistress of JFK, wife of CIA official, Ben Bradlee's tenant and sister-in-law, and victim of a terrible conspiracy.

By Timothy Leary

From 1960 to 1967 I was director of research projects at Harvard University and Millbrook, New York which studied the effects of brain-change drugs. During this period a talented group of psychologists and philosophers on our staff, ran guided "trips" for over 3000 volunteers. These projects won world-wide recognition as centers for consciousness alteration and exploration of new dimensions of the mind. Our headquarters at Harvard and Millbrook were regularly visited by people interested in expanding their intelligence—poets and writers like Allen Ginsberg, Charles Olson, Jack Kerouac, Robert Lowell; musicians like "The Grateful Dead,"

Charles Mingus, Miles Davis, John Lennon, Jim Morrison; philosophers like Aldous Huxley, Arthur Koestler, Alan Watts; swamis, gurus, mystics, psychics by the troops. Scores of scientists from top universities. And, occasionally steely-eyed experts, from government and military centers also participated.

It was not until the Freedom of Information Act of the Carter administration that we learned that the CIA had spent 25 million dollars on brain-change drugs, and that the U.S. Army at Edgewater Arsenal in Maryland had given LSD and stronger psychedelic drugs to over 7000 unwitting, uninformed enlisted men.

The most fascinating and important of these hundreds of visitors showed up in the Spring of 1962. I was sitting in my office at Harvard University one morning when I looked up to see a woman leaning against the door post, hip tilted provocatively, studying me with a bold stare. She appeared to be in her late thirties. Good looking. Flamboyant eyebrows, piercing green-blue eyes, fine-boned face. Amused,



Mary Pinchot Meyer and her husband Cord Meyer Jr.

Photo by Wide World

arrogant, aristocratic. "Dr. Leary," she said coolly, "I've got to talk to you."

She took a few steps forward and held out her hand. "I'm Mary Pinchot. I've come from Washington to discuss something very important. I want to learn how to run an LSD session."

"That's our specialty here. Would you like to tell me what you have in mind?"

"I have this friend who's a very important man. He's impressed by what I've told him about my own LSD experiences and what other people have told him. He wants to try it himself. So I'm here to learn how to do it. I mean, I don't want to goof up or something."

"Why don't you have your important friend come here with you to look over our project for a couple of days. Then if it makes sense to all concerned, we'll run a session for him."

"Out of the question. My friend is a public figure. It's just not possible."

"People involved in power usually don't make the best subjects."

"Don't you think that if a powerful per-

son were to turn on with his wife or girlfriend it would be good for the world?"

"Nothing that involves brain-change is certain. But in general we believe that for anyone who's reasonably healthy and happy, the intelligent thing to do is to take advantage of the multiple realities available to the human brain."

"Do you think that the world would be a better place if men in power had LSD experiences?"

"Look at the world," I said, "Nuclear bombs proliferating. More and more countries run by military dictators. No political creativity. It's time to try something, anything new and promising."

I offered her some California sherry from a half gallon jug, but she made a cute little face and invited me out for champagne. She continued asking me questions as we sat in the cocktail lounge.

Then I saw her face go tense.

"You poor innocent thing," she murmured. "You have no idea what you've gotten into. You don't really understand what's happening in Washington with

drugs, do you?"

"We've heard some rumors about the military," I said.

"It's time you learned more. The guys who run things—I mean the guys who *really* run things in Washington—are very interested in psychology, and drugs in particular. These people play hardball, Timothy. They want to use drugs for warfare, for espionage, for brainwashing, for control."

"Yes," I said. "We've heard about that."

"But there are people like me who want to use drugs for peace, not for war, to make people's lives better. Will you help us?"

"How?"

"I told you. Teach us how to run sessions, use drugs to do good." I felt uneasy. There was something calculated about Mary, that tough hit you get from people who live in the hard political world.

I asked once again, "Who are these friends of yours who want to use drugs for peace?"

"Women," she said laughing. "Washington, like every other capital city in the world, is run by men. These men conspiring for power can only be changed by women. And you're going to help us."

I drove Mary to the airport the next day and loaded her with books and papers about our research.

"I don't think you're quite ready to start running sessions," I told her. "I agree. I'll be back soon for more practice. And don't forget," she said. "The only hope for the world is intelligent women."

The next contact with Mary Pinchot, my mysterious visitor from Washington, came about six months later. She phoned me from across the river in Boston. "Can you meet me right away in Room 717, Ritz Hotel?"

Enchanting as before, she motioned to a silver ice bucket with a bottle of Dom Perignon tilting out. "I'm here to celebrate," she said.

I twisted the bottle to make the cork pop gently. "Your hush-hush love affair is going well?"

"Oh yes. Everything is going beautifully. On all fronts in fact. I can't give details, of course. But *top* people in Washington are turning on. You'd be amazed at the sophistication of some of our leaders. And their wives. We're getting a little group together, people who are interested in learning how to turn on."

"Really. I thought politicians were too power-oriented."

"You must realize, implausible as it may seem, there are a lot of very smart people in Washington. Especially now with this administration. Power is important to them. And these drugs do give a certain power. That's what it's all about. Freeing the mind."

She held out her glass for more champagne. "Until very recently control of American consciousness was a simple matter for the guys in charge. The schools instilled docility. The radio and TV networks poured out conformity."

"No doubt about it," I agreed.

"You may not know that dissident organizations in academia are also controlled. The CIA creates the radical journals and student organizations and runs them with deep-cover agents."

"Oh come on, Mary," I said. "That sounds pretty paranoid to me."

Mary sipped at her glass and shook her head. "I hate to be the one to break the news to you. Don't you know what these guys are most interested in right now?"

"Drugs, I suppose."

"You got it. A few years ago they became absolutely obsessed with the notion that the Soviets and the Chinese were persuading our POWs in Korea to defect by brainwashing them with LSD and mescaline."

"That's certainly possible. With what we've discovered about set and setting, we

know that almost anyone's mind can be changed in any direction."

"Any direction?"

"With a minimum of information about the subject's personal life and two or three LSD sessions, you could get the most conventional person to do outrageous things."

"Suppose the person wanted to be brainwashed in a certain direction . . . wanted to change himself?"

"Easier yet. Our research is conclusive on this. Changing your mind, developing a new reality-fix, is a simple and straightforward proposition. Of course, altering your mind is one thing. Changing the outside world to conform to your new vision remains the difficult problem for us . . ." I struggled for a word. "Utopiates."

Mary clapped her hands together like a birthday girl. "Utopiates! Beautiful. That's what it's all about, isn't it? Make it a better world." She sat down next to me and held my hand.

"I told you the first time we met. I want to learn how to brainwash."

"That doesn't sound very ladylike."

At this she burst into laughter. "If I can teach the use of utopiates to the wives and mistresses of important people in our government, then we can . . . well shit, Timothy, don't you see what we can do?"

"What?"

"We can do on a bigger scale what you are already doing with your students—use these drugs to free people. For peace, not war. We can turn on the Cabinet. Turn on the Senate. The Supreme Court. Do I have to explain further?"

Her proposal was scary. But come to think of it, it was close to what we Harvardites in our session rooms, lazily architecting hopeful futures, had spelled out as the goal of psychedelic research.

I looked at myself in the reflection of the window: a forty-two-year-old man, being lured into a feminist plot to turn on the leaders of the United States government to the idea of world peace. She lay on the bed, pleased with herself, awaiting my reaction, knowing I was going to agree.

"Okay. What do you want from me? The drugs?"

"Just a little bit to get started. With our connections we'll be able to get all the supplies we want. And all you need too. Mainly I want advice about how to run sessions. And how to handle any problems that come up."

We spent the next four hours in a cram course on psychedelic sessions. Set and setting. Centering. Room service brought more champagne and then dinner. I drove her to Logan to get a night plane back to Washington. The next day I mailed off a stack of session reports. Since she had sworn me to secrecy, I told no one except Michael Hollingshead, the British agent working on our staff.

A few weeks later another call came from Mary. Could I meet her at the Ritz?

She sounded tense.

For the next few months I was too busy with my own problems to think much about Mary Pinchot. In May 1963 I got fired from Harvard because of the controversial drug project. Then a large research center we had established in Mexico got shut down; American pressure on the Mexican government.

The phone call from Mary Pinchot came a week after our return from Mexico. She was at the Boston airport. She could spend only the afternoon. We met at a seafood restaurant downtown.

"Oh, you reckless Irishman. You got yourself in trouble again. It's magnificent, these headlong cavalry charges of yours. *Mais ce n'est pas la guerre.*"

"What'd I do wrong?"

"Publicity. I told you they'd let you do anything you want as long as you kept it quiet. The plan to set up psychedelic training centers around the country was ingenious from all sides. They would have infiltrated every chapter to get some of their people trained. But they're not going to let CBS film you drugging people on a lovely Mexican beach. You could destroy both capitalism and socialism in one month with that sort of thing."

I was struck again by the brittleness this aristocratic woman had picked up from those stern-eyed business-suited WASPs who shuttle from home to office in limousines—the information brokers, editors, board members, executive branch officials—youngish men with oldish eyes (faces you used to see around Harvard Square or in the Yale quad), initiated early into the Calvinist conspiracy, sworn to be forever reliable, working for Wild Bill Donovan in Zurich, for Allen Dulles in Washington, for Henry Luce as bureau chiefs and then shuffling from *Newsweek* to the *Post*, manipulators of secret documents, facts, rumors, estimates, arms inventories, stock margins, voting blocs, industrial secrets, gossip about the sexual and drug preferences of every member of Congress, trained to grab and maintain what they can, all loyal to the Protestant belief that the Planet Earth sucks.

"Never mind all that," said Mary. "While you've been goofing around, I've been working hard. My friends and I have been turning on some of the most important people in Washington. It's about time we had our own psychedelic cell on the Potomac, don't you think?"

"So you need more drugs? That's going to be a problem. My plans for chemical plants in Mexico got wiped out."

Mary laughed. "Oh that's no problem. I can give you a contact in England. They'll sell you everything you need. And if things go the way I hope," she said emphatically, "we'll be seeing lots of good drugs produced here at home."

I pressed her, but she declined to say more.

Late in November 1963 a phone call came from Mary Pinchot. Her voice was tight-roping the wire of hysteria. She had rented a car at La Guardia and was somewhere in Millbrook. She didn't want to come to the estate. Could I meet her in the village?

Driving out the gate I saw a green Ford parked down Route 44. It followed me. I slowed down. It pulled up behind me. Mary. She climbed in beside me motioning me to drive on.

I turned down a side road through an unforgettable Autumn scene—golden fields, herds of fat, jet-black cows, trees turning technicolor, sky glaring indigo—with the bluest girl in the world next to me.

"It was all going so well," she said. "We had eight intelligent women turning on the

most powerful men in Washington. And then we got found out. I was such a fool. I made a mistake in recruitment. A wife snitched on us. I'm scared." She burst into tears.

"You must be very careful now," she said. "Don't make any waves. No publicity. I'm afraid for you. I'm afraid for all of us."

"Mary," I said soothingly. "Let's go back to the Big House and relax and have some wine and maybe a hot bath and figure out what you should do."

"I know what you're thinking. But this is not paranoia. I've gotten mixed up in some dangerous matters. It's real. You've got to believe me." She glared at me. "Do you?"

Yes I do." Her alarm was convincing me.

"Look. If I ever showed up here suddenly, could you hide me out for a while?"

"Good." Now drive me back to my car. I'll stay in touch. If I can."

As I watched her drive away, I wondered. She wasn't breaking any laws. What trouble could she be in?

The next call from Mary came the day after the assassination of Jack Kennedy. I had really been expecting it.

I could hardly understand her. She was either drugged or stunned with grief. "They couldn't control him any more. He was changing too fast. He was learning too much."

"Who? You mean Kennedy?"

Long pause. Hysterical crying. I spoke reassuringly. She kept sobbing. "They'll cover every thing up. I gotta come see you. I'm scared. I'm afraid. Be careful."

The line went dead. Her words kept re-



James Angleton, chief of CIA counter-intelligence, who destroyed Mary's diary.

Photo by Wide World

peating in my mind. "They couldn't control him any more. He was changing too fast." I've never forgot those words.

In the months that followed I kept waiting for Mary to call back. I tried the Washington phone book for her number but she wasn't listed; not in Virginia or Maryland either.

My life was humming along. I got married and went on a round-the-world honeymoon. A few months later the marriage broke up. In my yearning for an ally, a friend, a woman, I found myself thinking a lot about Mary Pinchot.

Directory assistance in Washington, D.C. had numbers for several Pinchots but none for Mary. Then I remembered that she was a Vassar graduate and phoned the alumni office in Poughkeepsie. The cheery voice of the secretary became guarded when I asked for the address of Mary Pinchot.

"Mary Pinchot?" A long pause. "The person about whom you were asking . . . ah, her married name is Meyer. But I'm sorry to say that she is, ah, deceased. Sometime last fall, I believe."

"I've been out of the country. I didn't know."

"Thank you for calling," said the alumni secretary.

In shock I climbed out a third-floor window and up the steep copper roof of the Big House. There I leaned back against a chimney and tried to think things over. Michael Hollingshead, who sensed my malaise, scrambled up to join me, carrying two beers. When I told him about Mary, he brushed away a tear.

"I wonder what happened," I said.

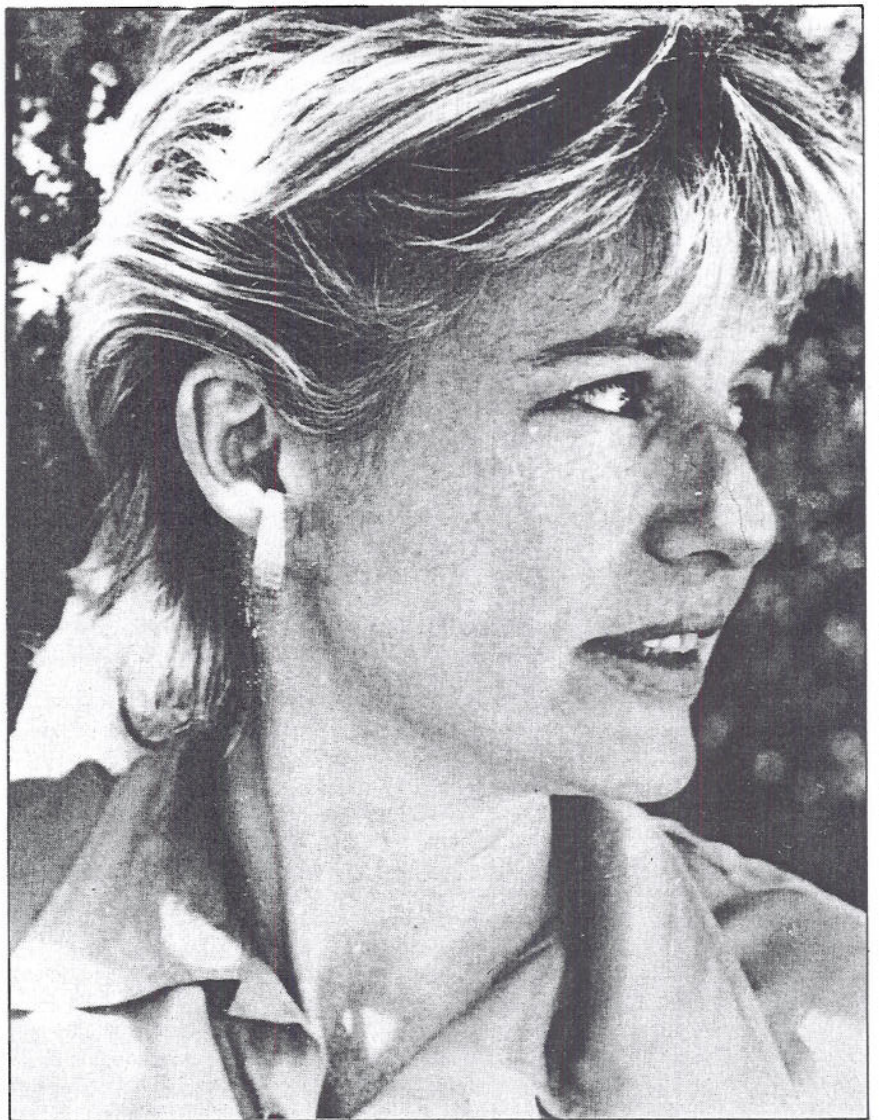
"Next time we go to New York, let's see what we can find out," said Michael.

So off we went, Michael and I, down the Hudson to New York to meet the light-artists and sound wizards who were popping up on the Lower East Side. And to find out what happened to Mary Pinchot Meyer.

I cabbed over to Van Wolfe's apartment, drank a beer, and asked him if he could get any material on Mary Pinchot Meyer. He made a phone call to a friend who worked on the *Times*. An hour later a messenger was at the door with a manila envelope full of clippings, and WHAM—there was Mary's picture, the pert chin and nose, the deep intense eyes. Above, the headline read:

WOMAN PAINTER SHOT AND KILLED ON CANAL TOWPATH IN CAPITAL
MRS. MARY PINCHOT MEYER WAS A FRIEND OF
MRS. KENNEDY
SUSPECT IS ARRAIGNED

Mary had been shot twice in the left temple and once in the chest at 12:45 in the afternoon of October 13, 1964 as she walked along the Old Chesapeake and Ohio Canal towpath in Georgetown. A friend told reporters that Mary sometimes



Mary Meyer as she looked when Timothy Leary met her.

Photo by Wide World

walked there with her close friend Jacqueline Kennedy.

Mary's brother-in-law, Benjamin C. Bradlee, *Newsweek's* Washington bureau chief, identified her body. Ben Bradlee was described as having been an intimate of the late President Kennedy. The article also mentioned Mary's ex-husband, Cord Meyer, Jr., former leader of the American Veterans Committee and the World Federalists, now a government employee, position and agency not specified.

Police said that the motive was apparently robbery or assault. Her purse was found by Ben Bradlee in her home. The suspect, a black male, was being held without bail.

My head was spinning with ominous thoughts. A close friend of the Kennedy family had been murdered in broad daylight with no apparent motive. And there had been so little publicity. No outcry. No call for further investigation. I felt that same vague fear that came when we heard about JFK's assassination.

"Can you get more information?" I asked Van.

Van came up to Millbrook the next weekend. I took him on a walk to Lunacy Hill. We sat smoking grass, watching the Hudson Valley tint purple in the sun set.

"My friend in police intelligence knew all about the Mary Pinchot Meyer case. Apparently a lot of people are convinced it was an assassination. Two slugs in the brain and one in the body. That's not the MO of a rapist. And a mugger isn't going to shoot a woman with no purse in her hand."

Van pulled out a Lucky Strike and lit it. His tremor was more pronounced than usual. "It's gotta be one of the biggest cover-ups in Washington history. It's too hot to handle. Everyone comes out looking bad. Some people say dope was involved. So the truth could hurt everyone, all those powerful people. No one wants the facts known."

As it turned out, it was some time before the facts were known.

One evening while lying in my cell in the Federal Prison in San Diego reading the paper a headline in the *San Francisco Chronicle* caught my eye:

NEW JFK STORY—SEX, POT WITH ARTIST

The AP WORLD

VOLUME XXIX, NUMBER 3 AUGUST, 1972

OVER THE B
Ankara Corre
Nick Ludington
way across the
the Bosphorus Bri
Russian freight
underneath.



Wirephoto Covers the Convention 3

Executive Newsphoto Editor Hal Buell describes how the AP's picture service gears up to bring pictures of a major political event.

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President Nixon visited the Soviet capital, and reporters were granted unprecedented privileges—for a while. Jim Peipert tells about before, during and after.

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Bob Johnson, who headed the Dallas bureau when President Kennedy was slain, relives the hours following the assassination.

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AT QUANG TRI: AP Paris photographer Michel Laurent, seated on proof of his proximity to the enemy-held provincial capital, Quang Tri City, talks with a South Vietnamese officer as government troops move to retake the town.



ers don't know
photographers
d out in their
Moscow's Red

former Dallas bureau chief recalls



By BOB JOHNSON

The question comes inevitably. It may come from a foreign service veteran or from a new chief of bureau or from his wife or from an old timer on the desk or from a young staffer. But it is always the same: "Tell me, what was it like?"

And nine years vanish. A shout rings through the office, long legs sprint toward a typewriter; there is a flash of instinct, a pause for judgment and—much later—a moment for tears.

I am back in that terrible warp of time, among the frozen seconds, the racing minutes, the interminable hours, the shrunken days—back in the

his staff during the assassination



TOO BUSY FOR TEARS

Dallas bureau when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated on Nov. 22, 1963.

Our coverage of the assassination really began, I think, on Oct. 24, 1963, just a month before the President came to Texas. That night, United Nations Ambassador Adlai Stevenson was spat upon and hit with a picket sign after making a UN Day speech in Dallas. That was when I began to worry about President Kennedy.

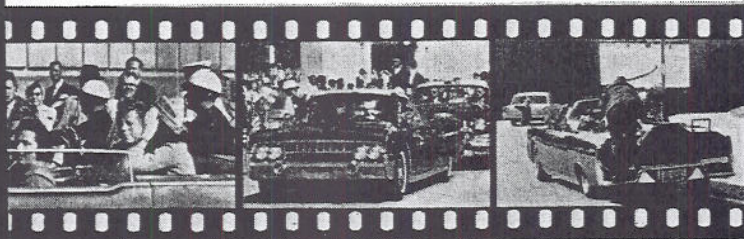
Of course, any AP chief of bureau always worries some when the President is flying around his territory. He is ultimately responsible for covering

the story I remember

TOO BUSY FOR TEARS

the President no matter what happens. White House staffers are with the President, but if plans change, if anything goes wrong, if they have to follow the President on an abrupt move, it's still the bureau chief's responsibility to see that the news is gathered and that it moves.

So we knew that at every stop, every landing, every takeoff, every appearance, we would have to station at least one Texas reporter and photographer, and more if we could. Especially in Dallas.



There was a lot of nonsense written about Dallas after the assassination. It was said that there was concern about the President's visit because Dallas was a racist city. The fact is Dallas and Atlanta were the two most racially progressive cities in the South at that time—and perhaps still are.

But nine years ago, Dallas was known as a nesting place for small groups of conservatives somewhere in the neighborhood of Attila the Hun. These minority elements were highly vocal and pretty much unchallenged in those days by the moderate vast majority. Some of them made up the crowd that harassed Adlai Stevenson.

In the month following that incident, there were editorials, letters to the editor, appeals from city officials and pleas from the pulpit for Dallas' extreme right groups to settle down and behave. "Let's show that Dallas knows how to treat a President" was the constant theme.

For most of that month there wasn't a lot we could do except worry because the place for Kennedy's Dallas speech was not determined until Nov. 16, and the motorcade route wasn't set until Nov. 19. Nevertheless, about Nov. 1, Assistant Bureau Chief Jim Mangan and I began deciding how we would staff the President's visit.

We knew that he was to fly to San Antonio on Nov. 21, go to Houston that night for a dinner and still later the same night to Fort Worth; on Nov. 22 he was to speak at a Fort Worth breakfast, then at a Dallas luncheon, fly on to Austin for a reception and dinner, and spend the night at Vice President

Lyndon B. Johnson's LBJ Ranch.

Before long, we learned that Frank Cormier and Jack Bell would be the Washington AP newsmen with the President and Henry Burroughs would be the photographer. Bell normally didn't travel with the President; he was head of the Senate staff and his specialty was the intricacies of congressional political maneuvering. That was why he was assigned to this trip: its purpose was mainly to give President Kennedy a chance to patch up, at least on the surface, an old political feud between Johnson and Gov. John Connally on one hand and Sen. Ralph Yarborough on the other.

Meanwhile, we worried. I figured that in spite of everything, there was a possibility of heckling—maybe even tomato throwing or something like that.

When the President's route was announced, I felt that if any such harassment occurred it might be at Love Field, where Air Force One was to land, or along the downtown part of the motorcade route—but it would be more likely at the Dallas Trade Mart, where he was to speak.

Our plans were not completed until the day before the President's arrival. Mangan, State Editor Bob Ford and I kept shifting assignments—trying to work out a system that would give us strength where we knew it would be needed and still provide flexibility in case of a demonstration.

The President's visits to San Antonio and Houston went off on schedule and he flew into Fort Worth just before midnight. Fort Worth Correspondent Mike Cochran, Dallas photographer Ferd Kaufman and Mangan joined the Washington staffers in covering him there.

When the President left Fort Worth the next morning, Mangan saw him away from the Hotel Texas and Cochran followed him to Carswell Air Force Base to get him off the ground. Mangan immediately drove back to Dallas, joining Bob Ford and another staffer, Patricia Curran, at the Trade Mart. Raymond Holbrook met the Presidential party at Love Field.

I had assigned Peggy Simpson to the downtown parade route and had instructed her to follow the motorcade on foot as best she could so that she could break away to a telephone in case of heckling. I also knew that either Bell or Cormier would be in the pool car with a mobile telephone.

As soon as the motorcade left downtown Dallas, Peggy was supposed to go to Love Field and catch a plane for Austin. I had plenty of staffers in the

Austin bureau, but the reception there that night was closed to everybody except invited guests. Peggy had gotten a state legislator to invite her as his date. This meant the AP probably would have the only reporter there, with the possibility of turning up an exclusive color story. We felt very clever about this.

We also, of course, had photographers at Love Field, along the motorcade route, and at the Trade Mart. One of these was Ike Altgens, a Wirephoto operator who often doubled as a photographer. Newsphoto Editor Dave Taylor told Altgens his post was the railroad trestle of the Triple Underpass, through which the motorcade would leave downtown and head north on Stemmons Freeway to the Trade Mart. The idea was that Altgens could get a scenic shot of the motorcade approaching the underpass with the downtown skyline forming a backdrop.

In the bureau, at that time, we normally had three editors on the desk. For this story I brought in Night Editor Ron Thompson to sit in as state editor for Ford. I joined Thompson on the desk, making a fourth, and of course we had extra Teletype operators assigned.

I had gone home at 1 a.m. Friday after making sure the President had landed safely in Fort Worth. When I got up, the morning was gray and drizzly. There was a full page ad in the morning paper challenging the President on softness toward Communism.

As I drove to the office, though, I worried more than anything else about Peggy Simpson and her legman assignment on the motorcade route: I was afraid the drizzle would spoil her hairdo for the reception that night in Austin.

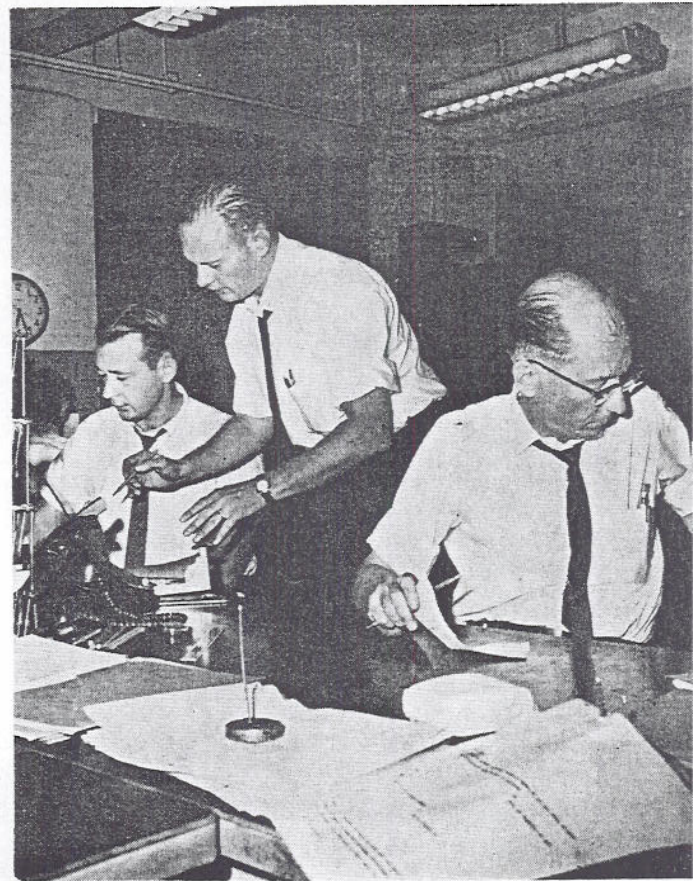
But it wasn't long before a brisk wind blew away the clouds and the sky burned with a hue, at once bright and limitlessly soft, that seems peculiar to the Southwest. It looked great.

The morning went off routinely. I updated a lead for Jack Bell. I got a call from AP Newsfeatures, asking how we were doing on a sales project. I said I would call back after I got the President out of town. Austin photographer Ted Powers, who had been sent to Uvalde, filed a story on President Kennedy's birthday telephone call to former Vice President John Nance Garner.

From the airport, Holbrook reported that the President's plane had landed at 11:37 a.m. The crowd was greeting Jack and Jackie warmly. There was no heckling. There were feminine squeals over the President and masculine shouts of "Hey, Jackie!" The motorcade was forming.

Bell phoned from the pool car—fourth in line

before tragedy struck, a feeling of relief



This was the scene at the Dallas bureau hours after the shooting, where the AP staff handled the continuing coverage. From left are James Mangan, then assistant bureau chief, Bob Johnson, who was bureau chief, and Bob Ford, state editor.

Altgens, still wearing his press badge for President Kennedy's visit, looks at his sequence of historic pictures.



TOO BUSY FOR TEARS

behind the President's. He gave me more description of the cheers at Love Field, the friendly crowds along the way, the warmest reception of the Texas trip.

Bob Ford called in from the Trade Mart. The place was filling; the crowd was entirely friendly, no pickets or demonstrators in sight.

I felt real relief. I thought, well, I guess we'll get through this one without any trouble. And I decided to leave my desk for a minute to go to the water cooler in the Dallas Times Herald newsroom, adjacent to the AP bureau.

Out on Main Street, Peggy and her party hairdo trotted alongside the motorcade. There wasn't the slightest trouble. Finally the crowd closing in around the cars blocked her.

She started back to the office, thinking she would get to contribute only a minor sentence about the friendly crowd. She heard a girl ask a policeman: "Why did he have to go by so fast?" And the policeman laughed. He said: "Well, you know, Honey, everybody in Dallas wants to shoot him; they've got to get him out of town fast." In the midst of the happy, laughing crowd, the intended irony seemed mildly amusing.

Ike Altgens tried to take his station on the railroad trestle. A cop ran him off because he wasn't a railroad employee. Ike went to look for a spot on the street near the Triple Underpass. . . .

The motorcade was nearing the end of Main Street, turning up Houston, ready to turn west again into Elm Street, past the Texas Schoolbook Depository and through the underpass.

I started back into the bureau. There was a cluster of Times Herald editors around the city desk, and I learned later that they were monitoring a police radio.

Felix McKnight, the executive editor, took a long step out of the cluster, beckoning to me and yelling.

"Bob, we hear the President may have been shot, but we haven't confirmed it!"

I ran into the bureau and put a book into my typewriter.

Wire filer Dick McMurray said: "It sounds like we may have trouble."

Ron Thompson said: "Bell just tried to call in, but he was cut off."

I wrote:

BULLETIN

DALLAS, Nov. 22 (AP)—

Then I took a deep breath. I expected another call from Bell momentarily. I thought, If I'm going to say the President has been shot, I'm going to be damned sure I'm right.

The telephone rang. It was Altgens.

"Bob, the President has been shot!"

"Ike, how do you know?"

"I saw it. There was blood on his head. Jackie jumped up and grabbed him and cried, 'Oh, no!' The motorcade raced onto the freeway."

"Ike, you saw that?"

"Yes, I was shooting pictures then and I saw it."

My fingers trembled. But they worked. And I finished the bulletin:

DALLAS, Nov. 22 (AP)—President Kennedy was shot today just as his motorcade left downtown Dallas. Mrs. Kennedy jumped up and grabbed Mr. Kennedy. She cried, "Oh, no!" The motorcade sped on.

I yelled "BULLETIN!" as I wrote. Thompson ripped the bulletin out of my typewriter and shoved it at Operator Julia Saunders. She timed it off on the AAA wire at 12:39 p.m. (CST). This was the first word in publishable form that President Kennedy had been shot.

Altgens had run five blocks from the scene to our Newsphoto office in the Dallas Morning News building. He had tossed his camera to another operator and called me on the hotline phone linking our two offices.

While we got the story moving, Altgens' film was processed and three historic pictures were transmitted: President Kennedy waving to the people just before the turn into Elm Street; the President's head dropping forward, with Mrs. Kennedy's white-gloved hand reaching to aid him, and a Secret Service Agent leaping onto the rear of the Presidential car to come to Mrs. Kennedy's aid. These were the only professional pictures made at the scene.

As Altgens telephoned me, the President's car reached Parkland Hospital, guided by a police escort and followed closely by the pool car. Jack Bell leaped out of the pool car while it was still slowing in the driveway. He sprinted for the President's car and saw Kennedy lying face down on the rear seat. To make doubly sure, Bell asked a Secret Service agent if that was the President. The agent said it was. Bell asked if the President was dead. The agent said he didn't think so. Governor Connally had been hit, too.

Bell found a telephone in the hospital and began phoning in what he had seen.

At the Trade Mart, Ford had been waiting outside for the motorcade. He heard a sputtering report from the radio on a policeman's three-wheel motorcycle: "The President has been hit!" Ford knew the vernacular. He knew the cops weren't talking about tomatoes. He ran for the AP's telephone inside the Trade Mart. He had to go about 100 yards around the building because the police would let the press out but not in the main en-

trance.

Ford told Mangan what he had heard. Mangan checked with me and then dispatched Ford and Pat Curran to Parkland Hospital.

The two press buses, left far behind by the President's car and the others that had raced for Parkland, arrived at the Trade Mart. Mangan found Cormier and told him what had happened. They started for the bureau in Mangan's car.

A Dallas nightside staffer had gone to a luncheon club meeting to pick up his wife. They heard a radio report of the shooting. He headed for the office. Another man left home repair tools scattered in his driveway and started in. Harold Ratliff, the bureau sports editor, got the news at a sports committee meeting. He jumped up and said: "You can find me at the office but don't bother me with sports before about next Wednesday."

Other staffers phoned for instructions or hurried to the office from home or from their assignments.

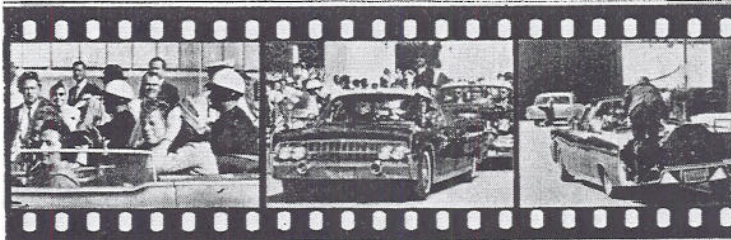
Of course, as it turned out, Ratliff and others did handle sports and other news before Wednesday. Operas and athletic events were cancelled. Stores were nearly empty. It seemed that the world came almost to a stop over that weekend, waiting to hear more about the assassination.

Nevertheless, as it always has, life went on and the AP report had to go on with the daily fodder of weather roundups, traffic fatalities and other things that seemed almost unbearably trivial.

So some staffers found that their role—and it was vital—was in supporting the assassination coverage by doing their regular jobs of filing wires and keeping up with other news.

But not immediately.

Immediately there was only one question: what had happened to the President.



Bulletin material continued to pour from Bell at the hospital and, now, from Ford and Pat Curran. A little later two other staffers arrived at the hospital.

New York had called. I talked to General Manager Wes Gallagher and General News Editor Sam Blackman. Both told me just to keep the copy com-

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ing; they said it looked good. They said Dallas was in control of the AAA wire.

I told Gallagher I had called up additional newsmen from Austin, San Antonio and Fort Worth and had also sent out a call for Wilbur Martin, the bureau chief in Oklahoma City. Wes said he would send more help from New York and Washington. Operators were coming from Kansas City. Extra photo help was flying in from Los Angeles.

I looked up from my typewriter and saw Mangan and Cormier coming in the door. I jumped up. I had never met Cormier. Strangely, it seemed later, we shook hands formally. Then he said: "What can I do?"

I pointed to a typewriter away from the main desk and said: "Take everything that's moved, go over there where it's quieter and start writing a wrapup lead." He did. I had Mangan take over the AAA wire.

At Parkland Hospital, Pat Curran had located a pay telephone. She and Ford had phoned in some notes, and now Ford was holding the phone while Pat went to look for more sources and more detail. Val Imm of the Times Herald came by and Ford agreed to hold an adjacent phone for her. They agreed to exchange whatever information they got.

In a few minutes, Val came bursting through the crowd. She grabbed her phone and told Ford: "I'm going to call my desk. I'm going to talk loud and slowly so you can talk behind me."

I answered the phone when it rang in the office. It was Ford.

"The President has died!" he said.

"Who said so?"

"Two priests who were with him at the end."

"Dead of what?"

"Dead of his bullet wounds."

I wrote:

FLASH

DALLAS—TWO PRIESTS WHO WERE WITH KENNEDY SAY HE IS DEAD OF BULLET WOUNDS.

That's long for a flash, but Blackman and I had agreed earlier that when the time for it came we wanted the flash to be attributed and as detailed as possible.

I followed the flash with this bulletin from Ford:

DALLAS, NOV. 22 (AP)—TWO PRIESTS STEPPED OUT OF AN EMERGENCY WARD TODAY AND SAID PRESIDENT KENNEDY

DIED OF HIS BULLET WOUNDS.

Now let's back up a bit. This is as good a place as any to answer some questions that are always asked.

Why did I write a bulletin instead of a flash reporting the President shot?

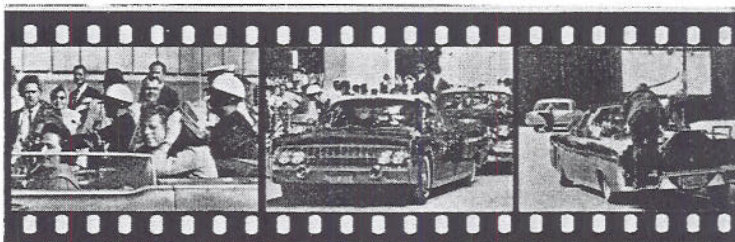
I did it for two reasons. First, I wanted it to be specific and publishable, with as much information as possible. Second, I wanted that ring of authenticity because I didn't want to be questioned by the general desk or anybody else. I figured I had enough problems without a call asking me if I knew what I was doing. It worked. It must have been at least 15 minutes and I had time to get things moving before I got the first call from the general desk.

Who was ahead on the story—AP or UPI?

This was UPI's first word:

DALLAS, NOV. 22 (UPI)—THREE SHOTS WERE FIRED AT PRESIDENT KENNEDY'S MOTORCADE TODAY IN DOWNTOWN DALLAS.

JT1234PCS



This was followed several minutes later by an add that began: NO CASUALTIES WERE REPORTED.

The add was neither completed nor timed because it was broken for this:

FLASH

KENNEDY SERIOUSLY WOUNDED
PERHAPS SERIOUSLY
PERHAPS FATALLY BY ASSASSINS BULLET

JT1239PCS

It was at that same minute that we filed our publishable, specific bulletin describing what had happened.

In those days the AAA wire was still an all caps circuit, and at that time of day it was split in Kansas City between east and west. KX gave the bulletin immediate relay, timing it off at the following minute, 1240PCS, and then combined the circuit.

UPI's first publishable bulletin that the President had been shot was timed at 1241PCS.

We were three minutes ahead with the flash reporting the President's death, ours moving at 132-PCS and UPI's at 135PCS.

We were ahead on most other developments and, partly because we got the jump with publishable copy, partly because of Cormier's smooth wrapups, we took most of the play.

Why was Bell beaten to the phone in the pool car?

In the front seat of the car were a police driver, Acting Press Secretary Malcolm Kilduff and Meriman Smith of UPI. In the back seat were Bob Clark of ABC, Bob Baskin of the Dallas Morning News, and Bell. The mobile phone was directly in front of Smith in the front seat.

When the shots were fired, Smith grabbed the phone and called his Dallas bureau. Then, I was told later by others in the car, as Bell tried to get the phone, Smith pretended he hadn't been understood in his office and hung on. Bell wrestled him for the phone and finally got it as Smith tried to slide under the dashboard. Then the phone went dead as Ron Thompson answered in the office.

Why did the phone go dead?

It is futile to speculate about that, but it is perhaps worth noting that even after Bell had the phone, its cradle was still directly in front of Smith.

But this is written only to answer those inevitable questions about speed. Checking back later as a matter of both professional and personal interest, I concluded that everybody did an outstanding job.

Outstanding—but perfect? Of course not. Everybody made mistakes.

Ours was in letting these two sentences slip onto the AAA wire: "There was an unconfirmed report that Vice President Lyndon Johnson had been wounded slightly. One spectator said he saw Johnson walk into the hospital holding his arm." Those words should not have made the wire. Neither Thompson nor I could remember having seen them as we handled copy. Six minutes later we overtook them with Mrs. Johnson's assurance that the Vice President was "fine" and had not been wounded.

Perhaps due to this, we heard no more about it.

But there was a rumor that did spread—that Johnson had suffered a heart attack. I first became aware of it in a telephone call from New York.

New York Traffic Bureau Chief Bernie Farrell and Dallas Traffic Bureau Chief Eddie Edwards were holding their phones open to relay messages between Gallagher, Blackman and me. Edwards said he had been told of a broadcast report that Johnson had suffered a heart attack. I assigned staffers to try to check it—although at that stage



Los Angeles Photo Editor Dick Strobel (left) was among the out-of-bureau AP staffers who rushed in to bolster the Dallas staff on the big story. At right is Dallas Photo Editor Dave Taylor.

the flash was
long for fullest
attribution

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nobody knew where Johnson was.

Some time later, Edwards came back to me and said Wes wanted to know about the heart attack. I said: "Tell Wes that we can't confirm it, and until we can I'm not going to put it on the wire." That was the last I heard of the rumor that day.

But it persisted elsewhere. In his memoirs published recently, Johnson said the heart attack rumor had been spread across the country by "the press."

Checking in the days immediately afterward, I was never able to pin down its source. However, apparently in trying to write around all possibilities in the absence of facts, UPI had said in one lead: "Terribly shocked Johnson, who has a record of heart illnesses, was whisked off. . . ."

There were other rumors that flourished after the assassination, mainly the one that there was more than one gunman. From our investigations at the time, we concluded that many of these rumors were started by foreign reporters unable to believe that an assassination could result from anything other than a political plot in the European tradition. A contributing factor could have been a UPI report that "three gunbursts of fire, apparently from automatic weapons, were heard."

At the time, however, our whole concentration was on reporting the story—not on what the opposition, or anybody else, was doing.

Cormier had started a third lead just a few minutes before the President's death was announced. Now he quickly went to a fourth lead and kept it moving in a masterful display of cool-headed work, weaving detail and background.

Cormier is what we country boys used to call "a long, slim drink of water"—meaning that he's tall, skinny and cool. He would be even taller if so much of him weren't turned under for feet, and one of the images frozen in my memory is of Frank's No. 12s flying across the office as he jumped atop a desk and over a bank of printers to get copy to the AAA wire filer.

The AP men who were being sent from Washington never came because at 2:38 p.m. Lyndon Johnson was sworn in as President aboard Air Force One, and the big jet immediately took off for Washington with the new President and the dead President's body.

AP staffers came up with the first report of the shooting of Officer J. D. Tippit and the arrest of Lee Harvey Oswald. From police headquarters, Ray Holbrook dictated a precise account of Oswald's

capture in the Texas Theater, where he tried to hide after killing Tippit about six blocks away. UPI, trailing Holbrook, reported that Tippit had pursued Oswald into the theater and had been shot there.

Within minutes after the Oswald arrest moved, Sam Blackman was on the phone again from New York, saying that Newsphotos had found a picture of a Lee Harvey Oswald who had tried to defect to Russia four years earlier. I checked the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, which had transmitted the original picture. Yes, it was the same Oswald, and I wrote a top on that story.

Wilbur Martin's flight from Oklahoma City landed at Love Field just as Air Force One departed. He hurried into the office and, with Mangan running the desk, Wilbur and I sat down to organize the remaining coverage and plan ahead.

Bell came in and wrote a first person account of what he had seen in the motorcade and at the hospital.

Later that night, Art Everett arrived from New York. After working on the overnight copy, Bell and Cormier flew back to Washington.

After this it was a matter of continual checking and rechecking of sources, writing new leads as development warranted, and getting up the overnight file after Oswald was charged with murder just before midnight. We went through the same thing again all day Saturday and well into Sunday morning.

I had rented hotel rooms so that key staffers could sleep an hour or so in the early cycle. Martin, Everett and I got up early Sunday to go to the office and prepare the Monday AMs budget. Peggy Simpson had checked in at police headquarters and started compiling a list of the known evidence against Oswald. She called and said that Oswald was to be transferred to the county jail at 10:30 a.m. Another newsman was waiting at the county jail, and we had photographers at both places.

We had finished our Monday AMs budgets by about 11 a.m. and were sure we had everything under control. We were still waiting for the jail transfer, but this looked like a routine delay.

Martin and I went into the Times Herald newsroom to get a Coke from the coin machine. Everett went back to my desk, put his feet up and started reading a newspaper. Ford was tidying up the state desk. Joe Carden was punching the budgets on the AAA.

As Wilbur and I walked back through the Times Herald city room, a rewriter, the only Times Herald staffer on duty, yelled at us: "I hear Oswald may have been shot—let me know if it's true."

Martin and I ran back into the bureau. The phone rang and Wilbur grabbed it. It was Peggy. I could hear her yell: "They shot him!"

Carden said: "What about a flash?"

"Yes," I said, "start punching a flash. 'Oswald shot.' And hold it."

Joe began putting the flash in tape.

Peggy had been standing with about 150 other reporters in the basement corridor down which Oswald would be led. As he came into view and was about to turn a corner, Peggy heard a shot and saw Oswald double over. She heard him gasp. Pandemonium broke out. Peggy quickly found a telephone in a small office adjoining the corridor. And now she was reporting to Martin.

From her description, Martin began dictating a bulletin to Ford. I stepped beside Wilbur and listened a moment until I was positive it was true that Oswald had been shot. I turned to Carden and waved: "Flash it." And his tape clicked through the AAA wire transmitter.

We were off again. Oswald was quickly started to Parkland. Jerry Pillard of the Austin staff was already there, keeping watch on Governor Connally. We sent San Antonio Correspondent Chuck Green to join him.

Jim Mangan and other staffers heard our bulletin on the radio—or saw the shooting on television at home—and hurried in.

The hospital staffers took turns relaying the news. Finally, with Mangan dictating to Carden: **FLASH**

DALLAS—DOCTORS SAY OSWALD DEAD.

I turned to Everett, as I had earlier to Cormier, gave him the AAA wire running and asked him to start a well-rounded lead. He sat down at his typewriter and turned out a smooth story that moved almost without a break.

Because the shooting was in the city jail basement, we had the name of the gunman, Jack Ruby, within 10 minutes.

At his first break from punching, Operator Joe Accardi walked over to Wilbur and me and said: "I know Jack Ruby—I've known him for years."

He sat down with Martin and they turned out a character sketch of Ruby so accurate that it was a model for the expanded profiles that followed in later days.

The emotional impact of the story never really hit us working on it in Dallas as it did the rest of the nation. We were too immersed in reporting it,

in the ceaseless checking and pursuit of detail, to realize really what had happened and what a tremendous story we had covered.

I think the first time any of us on the AP staff strongly felt any emotion other than a newsman's intense, focused excitement was on Monday, Nov. 25, the day of President Kennedy's funeral.

We had turned on a television set in the office. Nobody had time to watch it, but as we went about our work we would pause and see the long lines of the funeral cortege proceeding, endlessly it seemed, toward the grave. And always in the background the beat of muffled drums.

Finally, when it was time for the casket to be lowered, all of us stopped to watch.

The General Manager had ordered all AP wires silenced for two minutes. But one wire went on, sounding profane in the stillness. I found out later it was the U. S. Weather Bureau wire. And over its faint clacking, the mournful notes of "Taps" rose, wavered once on a high note and went on sweetly to the end.

I looked at my secretary, Anne Jackson, and her brown eyes were spilling over. White-haired Eddie Edwards had his knuckles in his eyes. All around were staffers with similar problems. I was biting hard on my lower lip.

We knew now that the main part of the story had really ended, four days after it began, in Arlington Cemetery.

The President was dead.

And the grave was closed and the wires came on and we went back to work.

A year later, for APN, I wrote a story about the mood of Dallas. I described how a tired businessman, going home from work a certain way, past the Texas Schoolbook Depository and the spot on Elm Street where the bullets hit, felt a prickling in the back of his neck.

When I go back to Dallas now and drive past the depository, especially on a crisp autumn day when the sky is bright and soft and infinitely promising, I still feel it. And I guess I always will.

Bob Johnson, who supervised coverage of the Kennedy assassination, headed the Dallas bureau from 1962 to 1969, when he transferred to New York. He has been the AP's general sports editor since that year.

