

THE VOICE

Special

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WASHINGTON CONFUSION Follows President's Death

by JIM WYRSCH

(Jim Wyrsch was the news editor of the Scholastic last year; he is presently a law student at Georgetown University. He was granted a press accreditation for the VOICE by Pierre Salinger, and this enabled him to enter many press sessions otherwise closed.)

Jack Kennedy is dead. The sad thing about it is that no one quite knows why. "Why?" is in the faces of the mourners outside the White House now. "Why?" is in the minds of all Americans. Why?

There is no perfect answer, of course, just as there is no perfect answer to anything. But Jack Kennedy's death doesn't even provide us with a working answer. He was in the prime of life; he had all the power and money that he could want or use; he had a courageous and beautiful wife, two beautiful children; his family was known for its capabilities, popularity and influence.

But Jack Kennedy was shot in Dallas Friday afternoon. He died before attaining what he most sought - an indelible place in the history of man. It was denied him by two, maybe one bullet fired from 100 yards away. He never had a chance; he never even regained consciousness long enough to tell anyone "Goodbye".

As I write this at the White House press room Sunday evening, I am also trying to forget like America and the world is trying to forget the tragedy of Friday afternoon.

There is something different about Jack Kennedy's death that challenges the certainty about the righteousness of the things we all rely upon. We shall need all our strength trying to forget this. To think about it at length brings an inner revulsion, physical and mental. What makes Jack Kennedy's death more poignant and tragic is the fact that he was Jack. Jack, the young leader of men, Jack who gave the young people of this country a new hope, Catholics a new rejuvenation, Negroes a new belief, and the country a new moving style. These things are now rendered incomplete by his death.

I kept a diary of the events Friday. It is a dismembered but exact diary. I believe it reflects the irrationality of events that have befallen us since the afternoon.

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John Fitzgerald Kennedy, 35th President
of the United States of America

CAMPUS REACTION IS SHOCK, GRIEF

There was no immediate tolling of the bells in Sacred Heart Church when President Kennedy died. It was the silence of sadness that passed quickly over Notre Dame that announced the tragedy.

The most immediate reaction was shock. "I didn't think assassination could happen anymore. Maybe in South America, or Vietnam, but not here." Another said, "If there were only something we could do besides sit here and listen to the radio. March, revolt or something."

Sacred Heart Church was completely filled for the 5:10 Mass, a Requiem for the dead President.

At St. Mary's the immediate reaction was that of shock and disbelief. A few girls sobbed while others stood motionless. At the report of his death, the halls became morbidly silent.

KENNEDY AWARDED LAETARE, 'PATRIOT'

John F. Kennedy, then a Senator, received the 1957 "Patriot of the Year" award from the senior class of Notre Dame. The award was presented at the Washington Day Exercises.

Four years later, President Kennedy was awarded the 1961 Laetare Medal by Notre Dame. He was the 79th person to receive the medal, given annually to an outstanding American Catholic layman.

Father Hesburgh, who announced the selection of Kennedy, said: "Because of what he has accomplished in so few years, because of his unique position in the long list of American Catholic laymen, and because of the sincere hope placed in his vision, energy and dedication by so many Americans of all races and faiths, the University of Notre Dame is pleased to confer this year upon John F. Kennedy the highest honor within her power to bestow: the Laetare Medal."

Kennedy's association with Notre Dame began in 1950 when he delivered the mid-year commencement address and was awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from the University.

STUDENTS SEND SPIRITUAL BOUQUET

Last night, Student Government initiated a spiritual bouquet for President Kennedy. Students promised to offer 18,987 Masses, 18,372 Communions and 15,300 rosaries. This bouquet was sent to Mrs. Kennedy with a telegram.

DEATH

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When I was two blocks from the White House, someone told me that Kennedy had been shot. I rushed to the AP wire service located at the Statler Hotel. It was 1:45 when the ticker tape said, "Kennedy has suffered a mishap in Dallas". I went to the National Press Club and told them that I wanted to follow the story. By 2:00 official word was in of Kennedy's death. Everyone was standing; there was complete silence. Outside, on Pennsylvania Avenue, nothing stirred. At the American Bank and Trust Company, panicky officials feared a run on the bank. They promptly shut down.

Then the FCC announced that it had cancelled Monday's banking and Stock Exchange activities. Back at the UPI office, the atmosphere was charged - everyone was running around for a story.

I left for the White House at 6:00. Upon arrival, I noticed the strict security measures. President Johnson was to land at 6:05. The helicopters touched down at 6:15.

I interviewed Marion Smith of the UPI who had ridden back with Johnson. Aboard the plane in Dallas, Johnson had waited for Mrs. Kennedy to compose herself before being sworn in. At its completion, Mrs. Kennedy retired to the rear of the plane and remained with her husband.

At midnight, there were 2000 people in front of the White House. At 3:00 there were about 3,000. They were waiting for the President to come home. Silent until his arrival, they then burst into tears.

Dallas Student Analyzes City: Assassination Plausible There

A few miles from my home President Kennedy was assassinated. As a Dallasite I must search my mind for the reason behind this tragedy.

Dallas, whose motto is "Freindliness," has long been known as the home of radicals of all persuasion.

Just as assassination is plausible because of the political extremism in Dallas, murder is casual and common place in Dallas and Texas society. Each year the state leads the nation in murder. There are more murders in Dallas alone than in England. Murder without motive is also typical. These murders are often accomplished with no retribution. A woman or teenager is seldom given more than a few years sentence, and often go free. Last year, grand juries in Dallas nobilled one of every three persons charged with murder.

FACED DEATH BRAVELY Says Fr. Hesburgh

Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., on campus after returning from a meeting of the National Science Board in Boulder, Colo., commented on the death of the President:

"On behalf of the students, faculty members, and entire Notre Dame family, I wish to express to Mrs. Kennedy and the children and to the entire Kennedy family our most profound sympathy upon the sudden tragic death of the President.

"Two years ago on every day, Nov. 22, 1961, Notre Dame presented to President Kennedy, an honorary alumnus of the university, the highest honor within its power to bestow, the Laetare Medal.

"At that time, the university saluted the President for his calm determination and imaginative courage in this age of prolonged and ever increasing danger.

"Today, calmly and with courage, the President met his death. In the spirit of his religious faith, we pray for the eternal repose of his soul and for the nation he led and served."

On Saturday, Fr. Hesburgh received an invitation from the White House to attend the funeral of President Kennedy. He left Sunday for Washington.

This shocking disregard for life and law is even evident in traffic fatalities--Texas is the leader here too.

It is also not surprising that Dallasites have little respect for their President. The Dallas Morning News has a propaganda technique that even the communists would respect. At times it seems that we have a tyrant in the White House. Letters to the editor are always one-sided, and are shockingly disrespectful to the president.

President Kennedy was not the only one subjected to hostility in this city. President Johnson has been booed and mobbed; Adlai Stevenson has been struck and spat upon.

The major and civic leaders are as shocked as we are and claim that these actions do not represent typical Dallasites or Texans. This is true, and yet the warped emotions of this segment of Texas are not suppressed by laws.

I can only hope that the tragic death of President Kennedy will bring a new awareness, a new tempering of extremism, and a greater respect for life in my city and state.

J. E. K.

HESBURGH AND CAVANAUGH CONTACTED

Fr. Hesburgh called WGN as soon as the news was made public, and announced that he was returning to the campus that night. He left Saturday for the funeral in Washington.

Fr. John Cavanaugh, former president of Notre Dame and longtime personal friend of Mr. Joseph Kennedy, the deceased President's father, was contacted Friday. He is now in Hyannisport, Mass., with the Kennedy family.

The widespread concern involved more than the immediate death of the President, such as his family, the economic influence of his death, the reorganization of the nation's leadership, and the significant changes implied for the 1964 Presidential election.