

## ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY AND AFTERMATH

In January 1961 Camelot came to Washington D.C. in the person of John Fitzgerald Kennedy and his family. Its shining light would be a beacon for a troubled world. Its dazzling light illumination was darkened during the Bay of Pigs fiasco, but returned again with brilliance during the Missile Crisis. It was never more evidenced than , while visiting Germany he said those famous words Ich Bin a Berliner or while in Paris charmed the sophisticated French when he told them he was the man who came to France to accompany Jackie .Camelot was still in existence in early November 1963 when the Black Watch Regiment from England played their Bag Pipes at the White House.

The President on occasion liked solitude. In early November on that year while visiting Arlington Cemetery, he was taken by the beauty of the area in the vicinity the Lee Mansion and stated that at some time he would liked to be buried there. Some people might call that a premonition.

The Washington Post forecasted a clear day with seasonal temperature for November 22 1963.. A more prophetic forecast would have called for a clear day followed by darkness and gloom. It was on that day the light went out in Camelot forever and the world lost one of its leading Stateman. It was plunged into a comatose week of shock and disbelief.

Shortly after noon in Dallas Texas, on November 22 1963 America lost its President, John F. Kennedy. The world was plunged into a comatose week of shock, disbelief and recriminations. The President of the United States was shot and killed by Lee Harvey Oswald, a former Marine and defector to the Soviet Union. He shot and killed the President from a 6th floor window of the Texas Book Depository. Oswald was arrested shortly thereafter in a movie theater after he shot and killed a Dallas Police Officer. He was charged in that murder. Unfortunately before the police could get a confession from him concerning the killing of the President, Oswald shot and killed in the basement of the Dallas Police Headquarters 2 days later by Jack Ruby, a local bar owner. Ruby was also a minor hoodlum.

The statement is made in the definitive way concerning Oswald's shooting of the President because there has been no hard evidence to date, nothing to support any conspiracy theories in a court of law nor a scintilla of fact that would prove otherwise.

In 1963 there was no Federal Statute that made it a crime to murder the President of the United States. The Killing of Kennedy was a local murder falling within the purview of the City of Dallas and the State of Texas. How then did the FBI obtain its investigative jurisdiction of the murder?

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The FBI has investigative jurisdiction over Theft of Government Property, Sabotage, Destruction of Government Property and Crimes on Government Reservations among over 200 other violations of Federal Law. Air Force 1, the Presidential Aircraft was assigned to the 98th Special Operations Squadron. which was and still is Headquarters at Andrews Air Force Base at Camp Springs Maryland. I was the Agent that handled all violation on AAFB. I made it a practice to be on hand at the base whenever the President took off and returned from on of his trips to handle any violations of law over which the Bureau would have primary jurisdiction. My duties allowed me to be present when the President departed for Texas on Nov. 21.

On November 22, at about 12.30 PM , while on my way to lunch, I received a radio message from Special Agent Gene Weimer informing me that the President had just been shot in Dallas. I drove to Prince George's Co. Police Headquarters in Seat Pleasant Md. and was met By Lt. George Clements and Sgt. Bob Hamilton who verified the information. We watched the TV proceeding from Dallas in their office to hear the latest news. Walter Cronkite was describing what happened when he was interrupted and then e said in his opinion the bullet made the fateful announcement that the President was dead. A phone call was placed to the field office HQ in Baltimore to advise SAC Edwin Tully of the latest news and told him I was immediately proceeding to AAFB to handle any jurisdiction problems that might arise. Just prior to leaving the PD a television announcement stated indicating that the President's body would be flown back to AAFB that evening. I immediately called the Director Of Law Enforcement and Security on the Base and learned that No one at Andrews had heard about the destination of Air Force One. Col. Robert T. Best, a tall, ramrod type man with a deep voice was the Director, Bob was and is a very close personal friend of mine and a former fellow officer when we were stationed at Langley AFB Va. during the Korean War. He requested forthwith action on my part and to brief the base Commander upon arrival I then called the Hyattsville Resident Agency and spoke to Jim Siebert, the Senior Resident Agent and appraising him of the situation suggested that he Join me at Andrews.

Upon arrival at Andrews Bob best an I went to base Headquarters along with Bob Mitchell the Base OSI commander and the Judge Advocate. I brief the Commanding General and awaited further information concerning the arrival of AF One. Jim Siebert arrived at about 3 PM stating that the road to AAFB was jammed with people who were coming to the Base for the arrival of the President's body. After a quick consultation, COL. Best ordered the base closed to all but authorized personnel which would include the press, news networks to camera crews, members of Congress, the Cabine, the Diplomatic corp and essential White House personages.

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Col Best, Mitchell and Jim Sibert drove to Base Operations with me to await AF 1. Bob Best received word from the aircraft that it would be landing at about 6 PM with President and Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Kennedy JFK and others. By this time the tarmac in front of Base Operations was more active than Grand Central Station on a holiday weekend getaway. Areas were roped off for the press and the other dignitaries as closed to where the plane would discharge its pitiful cargo. The area in back of the fence at base operations, the normal viewing area was crowded with military personnel. Col. Best, Bob Mitchell, Sibert and myself made our way through the throngs and made contact with the Secret Service Agents who I knew and advised them of our responsibility. Best established crowd control and arranged for an honor guard and physical security for AF 1 upon landing.

Shortly before 6 PM as AF 1 was preparing for landing Bob Mitchell told me I had a call from my office in Baltimore from Ed Tully. I made my way back into Base Operations through the crowd and called Ed. He said he had just received a call from Director Hoover who directed me to stay with the body of the President no matter where it went and to obtain any evidence of the murder that might be in the body and to take it to the laboratory in WDC. I was to take whatever action that was necessary deemed appropriate under the circumstances. He advised that the Bureau had already instituted a massive investigation into the crime. I returned to the tarmac just as the plane was taxiing to a site in front of Base Operation, and told Sibert, Best and Mitchell what Hoover said. We immediately started to look for Jim Rowley the Director of Secret Service and locating him told him of Hoover's instruction. By this time Bobby Kennedy had just entered the plane from the front and walked to the rear left door, opened it with the help of the crew and started to move the casket into position for removal. Rowley directed me and Sibert to enter one of the limousines that were lining up next to the plane. He told us that the body was to be taken to Bethesda Naval Hospital at the direction of Mrs Kennedy where an autopsy was to be performed.

The body of the murdered President was taken off the aircraft after some slight confusion and was carried a few steps in a waiting gray Navy ambulance. Two Secret Service Agents, the ones that had been in the car with Kennedy when he was shot, took the place of the nurse and the driver of the ambulance. Mrs. Kennedy and Bobby Kennedy got into the rear of the vehicle with the body. Sibert and I got into the 2nd vehicle in the motorcade with Pamela Turner, Mrs. Kennedy's secretary, and President's valet. The vehicle in front of us contained Larry O'Brien, General Godfrey Mc Hugh and other members of JFK's party. Upon entering the car Miss Turner was most concerned about the condition of Governor Connally and any one else that may have been shot. She wanted to know if we could shed any light on a rumor she heard in Dallas that Secret a Secret Agent had been killed. She was advised that we had no information to furnish her at that time concerning the events that happened in Dallas.

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There were several other limousines in back of ours. The motorcade with motorcycle escort entered Suitland Parkway and proceeded to Bethesda. Enroute we observed that on either side of the parkway throngs of people were silently gathered. Many were in tears, some openly crying. At a point shortly before we entered Washington D.C. several motorcyclists from the rouge group called the Hells Angels came up to the motorcade and wove in and out of the cars in the procession. The Police immediately followed them. What happened after that I don't know. I do know that we were not bothered again during the slow trip to the Hospital.

Arriving at the grounds of the Hospital, we noted that the drive way was lined with Naval Personnel and a great amount of others. The procession stopped in front of the main entrance of the hospital. Navy brass were waiting. Mrs. Kennedy exited the ambulance with the Attorney General and after brief words with the administrators, the Secret Service accompanied them to the 19th floor. The driver stayed in the ambulance - the other agent entered the hospital. Larry O'Brien, Kennedy O'Donnell, General Mc Hugh and other members of the Presidential Party were standing in front of the hospital talking. After several minutes Sibert and I went up to them and asked them the reason for the delay. O'Brien told us they did not know where the autopsy room was. We told them to have the ambulance follow us to the rear where the room was. By this time Miss Turner and the valet had left the car to be with Mrs. Kennedy. There appears to be some confusion in some minds concerning a second ambulance creating some type of an incident can assure you that the ambulance carrying the President's body was in my line of vision until the time we the we stopped our vehicles in the rear of the hospital.

Sibert and I left our limo. and went over to the ambulance. The Secret Service agent who had exited the ambulance in the front of the hospital came out the corridor door in the rear. We approached him identified ourselves and told him our mission. The Agent Roy Kellerman, who was the Asst Special In Charge of the White House detail and who knew Kennedy personally for 3 years said the Rowley had already contacted him. The driver of the ambulance, Special Agent Bill Greer, Kellerman, Sibert and myself went to the rear of the vehicle, opened the door and proceeded to take out the casket. An honor guard arrived at this time and assisted us in placing the casket on a conveyance and moving it up a short flight of 2 or 3 steps onto the small landing just outside the corridor that Kellerman had just exited. An honor Guard member opened the door to the corridor and we four with some members of the honor guard rolled the casket into the corridor. Immediately upon entrance several feet away was a door on our left. Pushing opened the door took us into a small room with several morgue slots for bodies. I recall being told by a naval attendant who met us at the door that one of the slots contained a small child who had died that day. There was another door to our right, of the swinging variety with glass panel that took us directly into the autopsy room. We rolled the

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conveyance into the room and veered to our left where there were persons dressed in medical surgical garb. They immediately introduced themselves as the autopsy surgeons and directed us to move the casket next to a standard autopsy table. The casket was opened by the medical technicians.

Inside the bronze casket was the body of the murdered President. The body itself was wrapped in a sheet, with another sheet bloody sheet wrapped around his head. The body was lying on a plastic type sheet to prevent, one would suppose, the inside of the casket from being irrevocably soiled. His hands were clenched, eyes opened and his mouth in a grimace.

Technician took the sheets off the body and we assisted them in taking the body out of the casket placing it on the autopsy table. One of the physicians, Commander Boswell or Humes requested that all non medical personnel who were to assist with the autopsy leave the room so that x-rays and pictures could be taken. Sibert, Kellerman, Greer and myself returned to the ante room we had just left and observed through the window in the door the procedures going on in the autopsy room. The room itself was set up with a small balcony which could be reached by stepping up about two steps onto a row of seats which overlooked the room. The seats were occupied by medical personnel. Upon completion of the x-rays and pictures we returned to the room. Never at any time were the investigative agents kept out of the room as some uninformed authors suggested. It would have been a physical impossibility for anyone to have tampered with the casket or the body from the time it left AF One till the time we took the President out of his coffin. The x-rays were being developed by the Navy and the film of the pictures was given to the Secret Service for development.

It is to be noted that there was much discussion among the autopsy physicians as to whether or not to do a complete procedure. The President's physician, Admiral Berkley, said that Mrs. Kennedy wanted a partial autopsy. We, the investigative agents, wanted a full autopsy to ascertain the exact cause of the President's death, however we had no authority to dictate to the Navy physicians. The Admiral Holloway the commanding Officer in charge of the hospital resolved the question by directing a full autopsy. While in the ante room Sibert and I had agreed that since the FBI was investigating the assassination and since eye witness, if interviewed as soon as possible after the event was of paramount importance, we would each stay with one of the Secret Service Agents and make notes of their observations as the evening progressed took Kellerman, Jim took Greer. Neither of the two agents had an opportunity to clean up after the shooting Both had blood and parts of body tissue on the back of their coats, evidence of the force with which the President's head had, for want of a better word, exploded.

One must realize at this time that Sibert and I were the only two people representing any agency that could be

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considered a disinterested party. The was concerned with the immediately event at hand. The Secret Service was most concerned since their most important assignment lay death on the table. Jim and I were there only to record the facts as they occurred. As such we exercised what we believed was our property in all the actions we took.

At some time that evening General Wehle the commanding officer of the Military District of Washington tried to enter the room . I would not allow him since he had no obvious reason for doing so and at that time I had only his word as to who he was . After properly identified himself, he told me he had heard that the casket which transported the President, had been broken in Dallas as it was being carried into the plane. He did not feel that it was appropriate for the President of the United States to be buried in a broken coffin. I allowed him in . He verified it was broken and some time later returned with another coffin, empty of course. Jim and I also felt that it would be appropriate that a listing be made of the people who were in attendance. We hastily passed around a sheet of paper and directed that all present write down their names. We believe they did.

Immediately upon viewing the body it was evident that a tracheotomy had been performed. Humes viewing the body indicate that some type of surgical procedure had been in the head region, possibly cutting of hair or removal of some slight tissue to view the massive wound in the right rear of the President's head. The information relative to the surgical procedure was made by the physicians not by the FBI agents. We merely reported what we heard. Humes delayed the cutting into the body until the x-rays were developed. They were returned to a small room within the autopsy room and viewed . Humes pointed out to Sibert and I the many fragments of bullets or skull that was in the skull cavity. Parts of the brain were still within the cavity, but not much. The head wound was massive. It would seem that no one could survive such an injury. the many I believe there were about 40 pieces of fragments in the skull. The next had the cutting of a tracheotomy.

Humes had just began to start the autopsy by performing the V shape incision on the chest. This of course after he dictated the normal procedural information relative to his observations in relation to the body. Lt.Col. Pierre Finck, from the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology arrived at this time to assist in the procedure. Humes pointed out a tracheotomy had been performed. He also pointed out to Sibert and myself the grave wound at the right rear of the President's head and the tremendous damage done to the brain therein. He indicated that the bullet had fragmented upon entering the skull. This is the reason for all the fragments in the brain and the peripheral area .Dr. Humes removed 2 fragments of metal in my presence. He measured one and told Sibert and me it was 7 x 2 millimeter. The other was measured as 1 x 3 millimeters. They were placed in a glass jar. We signed a receipt for both missiles. No other particles were taken from the body nor were there any other

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wounds of any sort in the front other than those already mentioned.

After completion of the procedure on the front of the body we assisted in turning it over. One must realize that at that the body had never been turned over in Dallas. We were aware, from information furnished by Kellerman and Greer, that external cardiac massage was performed by the attending Dallas physicians. Upon viewing the rear of the President the first thing that everyone noticed was the large scar on the President's back due to an operative procedure. Jim Sibert noticed a small hole in the upper right rear of the back and pointed it out to Humes and Finck. They said it was a bullet wound. Humes and Finck probed the wound with a surgical probe and their fingers, and determined that since the extremity of the hole could be felt there was no exit for the wound. He measured the location of the wound as approximately 2 inches to the right of the center line of the spinal column just below the shoulder. He said the trajectory of the missile that caused the wound entered from the rear at a 45 to 60 degree angle. All of the calculations mentioned were Humes's not mine. Now the doctors were faced with a dilemma. There was no complete bulletin the body as determined by probing and X rays. They were at a lost to explain what had happened to the bullet that entered the back which penetrated only a shot distance.

All of us at the table were at a lost to explain the mystery. Could it have been a plastic bullet that had dissolved? Or an ice one? After lengthy discussion it was decided that Jim would call the FBI, laboratory, firearm section for a possible explanation. Jim learned from agent Chuck Killion of the Laboratory that they had just received a bullet from Dallas that had been located on a stretcher that had been used at Parkland Hospital for the Presidential party. It was of cooper alloy, full jacket and appeared to be of a size used in a 6.5 millimeter rifle. Sibert returned to the autopsy room and told Humes what he had learned. Humes appeared greatly relieved. It was quite likely, he said, and entirely possible that the bullet found on the stretcher in Dallas accounted for the fact the bullet that entered the back could not be found. He grew more confident as he thought about it and appeared convinced that the Dallas bullet had worked its way out of the back through the external cardiac massage performed on President in an effort to save his life. As God is my witness at no time during the autopsy or at its completion did any of the doctors offer any explanation other than that the back wound was the result of a bullet that worked its way out and dropped on the Dallas stretcher. This was the way they explained it after the autopsy was completed

The autopsy being finished members of the Gawlers funeral home were allowed in to prepare the body for burial. Cosmetically, when they finished with the body, it appeared as if JFK was sleeping. The head wound and the neck procedure had been

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covered, the body dressed, even as to underwear, the eyes closed, and awaited Mrs. Kennedy for viewing. She and Bobby came and left after a short time at the casket.

When we left Andrews early that evening our vehicles were still at Base Operations. Having no transportation and since it was long after midnight Admiral Holloway placed a navy driver and vehicle at our disposal. Prior to leaving I requested copies of the xrays and the photographs to be forwarded to the FBI. Kellerman and Holloway state as soon as they were all developed they would be.

Enroute to Andrews Jim and I compared notes and agreed to go to Baltimore on Tuesday, the 26th, to dictate our report. We had notified our Headquarters that from Bethesda before leaving. On arrival at Andrews we again called our office to give a brief run down as to what had occurred at the autopsy and arranged for a stenographer. Ed Tully told us that he had been in contact with Hoover who had been contacted by President Johnson. Johnson had given the FBI the investigations of Kennedy's death. A teletype had gone out to all field offices and Legal attaches ordering the most massive investigation in the Bureau's history.

Returning home shortly at about 7 AM, I was met at the door by Liz, Many of the lights were still on in the homes in the neighborhood. It seemed everyone was watching television or listening to the radio for information concerning Kennedy. Liz had been crying as I related to her the day's events. The entire country, it appeared, was also crying and continued to do so for the next several days. Looking back at the day's events I kept thinking of Kellerman and Greer. I wondered what their future was with the Service. Roy had been the agent who had directed the Security of the President on the Texas trip. That night at Bethesda he told me that that morning he cautioned Kennedy not to be so open with the crowds for security reasons. Kennedy told him that if someone wanted to kill him all they would have to do was use a scope rifle from a high building. Roy had tears in his eyes when he told me. I asked him if he had called his wife since the shooting since there had been a report that Secret Service Agents had been killed. He said he had not and it was only then he realized how his wife must be feeling. He called her at that time from the phone in the autopsy room. Jim did not use that phone when he called the Lab. Too many people were around and too much confusion.

On Saturday morning, after getting a few hours sleep, I took my 2 older sons, I had 7 to WDC to view the body that was at this time lying in state in the Capitol Rotunda. Coming down North Capitol St. we noticed an immense crowd of people heading in the same direction. Passing by the Capitol the crowds were many blocks long. Everyone wanted to pay their respects to the martyred young President. Later it would be said

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that the lines to view were the longest in the history of Washington. What they saw was a closed coffin draped with the American Flag. On leaving the Naval Hospital the night of the assassination the hearse drove to the White House and remained there that day for viewing by the family and very close personal friends. Mrs. Kennedy directed that the casket be closed for viewing by the general public. She told her aides that the trammer of seeing such a young man with a very young family looking as if was asleep would be too much for the public to bear. She did not want to take the risk of any incidents happening. My sons and I drove home rather than wait the several hours necessary to view the casket. I was tired and the boys were frisky.

Several phone calls were made that day to Baltimore and Bureau Headquarters. It seemed that every supervisor wanted to hear about the autopsy. Additional instruction were forthcoming to contact all Bureau criminal informants across the nation for any information that might be of value to the investigation.. Security informants were also to be contacted since the reported killer, Lee Harvey Oswald had at one time defected to the Soviet Union and had a Russian wife. Field offices were to be kept opened on a continuing basis until further notice. All leads were to be immediately handled. That evening I spent the time reviewing my notes to see if there was anything I had left out and to place events in there proper order. Sunday Oswald was killed by Jack Ruby in Dallas Police Headquarters in front of a worldwide television audience. My sons Andrew, only 5 years old started to cry. He thought Oswald the rabbit had been killed. 1

Monday I went to Baltimore to speak to Ed Tully concerning our interviews with Kellermen and Greer. He advised that the Washington Field Office of the FBI had called Bureau Headquarters requested that if there were to be any further interviews with Secret Service personal they be conducted by WFO agents. Hoover wanted to know if Tully agreed with that. Tully advised Hoover that both Sibert and myself had established a rapport with the Service, obtained their confidence and were more qualified to continue interviewing the principles in Washington. Hoover agreed. Interviews were set up for Kellerman, Greer and the head of the White House detail, Jerry Behen at their office in the White House on Wednesday the 27th.

On Wednesday Jim and I traveled to the White House. By this time the Secret Service agents had an opportunity to compare notes. We went over what they told us on the 22nd. They agreed it was factual. We then discuss the procedure used to insure the President's safety on such trips and the shifting of personnel from the Presidents to the Vice Presidents plane. We specifically asked about the immediate action taken by Greer when he heard the shots. indicated that Kellerman told him to immediately get to the nearest hospital. Kellerman said that there were three shots and only 3 shots. Immediately after the

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first shot he heard the present say \_My God I've been hit\_ I asked him how he could be so sure it was the President speaking. Kellerman answered \_Frank there was only one man in the back seat that spoke with a Boston accent. and that man was Jack Kennedy. \_He said he knew Kennedy for 3 years with daily contacts and knew him to be a fun loving sociable, gregarious person with his Secret Service agents. All of them on the White House detail readily recognized his voice. There was not the slightest doubt in his mind that he heard the President speak. We discussed procedure with Jerry and availability of agents as well as the reasons for only the police and the Secret Service providing protection etc. On completion of the Interviews, which took several hour, we return to our office.

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