

# The New World Order

THE DAY JOHN KENNEDY DIED

Sun cleared dawn's drizzle, but gloom clouded Dallas

by Bryan Woolley

Staff Writer

The valet walked past the Secret Service guard and entered Suite 850 of Fort Worth's Texas Hotel. He knocked on the door of the master bedroom. It was 7:30 a.m. "Mr. President," he said, "it's raining out."

President John F. Kennedy, coming out of sleep, replied, "That's too bad."

While he was dressing, he heard the murmur of the crowd outside and went to the window. Below him, 5,000 people were standing patiently in the soft drizzle, some wearing raincoats, some holding umbrellas, most simply ignoring the weather. They were office and factory workers. They had begun gathering before dawn to hear the speech the President would make in the parking lot where they stood. Mounted police officers wearing yellow

slickers moved among them. "Gosh, look at the crowd!" the President said to his wife. "Just look! Isn't that terrific."

In the lobby, he was joined by Vice President Lyndon Johnson, Gov. John Connally, Sen. Ralph Yarborough, several members of Congress and the president of the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce. They crossed Eighth Street and plunged into the crowd, shaking hands, smiling. They mounted the truck that was to serve as the speaker's platform. Kennedy grabbed the microphone and shouted: "There are no faint hearts in Fort Worth!"

The crowd cheered. Somebody yelled, "Where's Jackie?"

Kennedy pointed toward his eighth-floor window. "Mrs. Kennedy is organizing herself," he replied. "It takes her a little longer, but, of course, she looks better than we do when she does it."

Fort Worth was the third stop on the President's five-city Texas tour. He had ridden through Houston and San Antonio like a triumphant emperor, and Fort Worth had stayed up past midnight to welcome the handsome 46-year-old President and his beautiful 34-year-old wife, lining their route from Carswell Air Force base to the hotel.

After an informal speech in the parking lot, he would go to the hotel, deliver a breakfast speech, fly from Carswell to Love Field, ride in a motorcade through Dallas, deliver a speech at a \$100-a-plate luncheon at the Dallas Trade Mart, fly to Austin for a banquet and a reception at the Governor's Mansion, and then go

to the LBJ ranch for a weekend of rest.

Back inside the Texas Hotel, Kennedy accepted the ceremonial cowboy hat from his hosts, but refused to wear it for photographers and TV cameramen. He would model it later, he said, at the White House. His breakfast speech was the standard fence-mending one-- about the greatness of Texas and Fort Worth and the Democratic Party--and it drew a thunderous ovation.

The President and the first lady retired to Suite 850 to prepare for the flight to Dallas. Kennedy placed a call to former Vice President John Nance "Cactus Jack" Garner in Uvalde, Texas, to wish him a happy 95th birthday, and an aide showed him a black-bordered full-page ad with a sardonic headline in The Dallas Morning News. "Welcome Mr. Kennedy to Dallas," it read. In 13 rhetorical questions, something called the "American Fact-Finding Committee" accused the administration of selling out the world to communism.

"Oh, you know, we're heading into nut country today," the President said. Mrs. Kennedy later told author William Manchester that he paced the floor and then stopped in front of her. "You know, last night would have been a hell of a night to assassinate a president," he said. "There was the rain and the night, and we were all getting jostled. Suppose a man had a pistol in a briefcase." He pointed a finger at the wall and pretended to fire two shots.

Not many in the presidential party were looking forward to Dallas. Several Texans--some from Dallas--had warned the

President not to include Dallas on his Texas tour, that an ugly incident was likely to occur there. But Kennedy insisted that the state's second-largest city be placed on the itinerary.

So the preparations had been made. Dallas civic leaders had launched a public relations campaign to try to ensure a friendly turnout for the President.

Seven hundred law officers--city police officers and firefighters, sheriff's deputies, Texas Rangers and state highway patrol officers--had been assembled to keep order. About the time that John Kennedy was waking up, Dallas Police Chief Jesse Curry had gone on TV to warn that his officers would take "immediate action to block any improper conduct." If the police were inadequate, he said, even citizen's arrests were authorized.

Others were preparing, too, in the early morning. Waiters were setting the places for the Trade Mart luncheon. A warehouse worker named Lee Harvey Oswald sneaked a rifle and a telescopic sight into the Texas School Book Depository. Because of forecasts showing that the rain probably would be past Dallas by the time the presidential party arrived, a Kennedy aide told the Secret Service not to put the bubble-top on the big blue limousine in which the President and Mrs. Kennedy would ride.

Air Force One had barely left the runway at Carswell before it began its descent toward Love Field. The flight took only 13 minutes. The big plane touched down at 11:38 a.m. Police armed with rifles stood along the roof of the terminal building. A large crowd waited beyond a chain-link fence. Many in the crowd

were jumping, screaming, waving placards: "We Love Jack," "Hooray for JFK." Others were less friendly. They held placards, too: "Help Kennedy Stamp Out Democracy," "In 1964 Goldwater and Freedom," "Yankees Go Home And Take Your Equals With You." They booed and hissed when the President and first lady emerged from the plane, smiled, waved and descended the stairs of Air Force One.

For the fourth time in 24 hours, Lyndon and Lady Bird Johnson were waiting to welcome the Kennedys to a Texas city. The presidential couple was introduced to the 12-man official welcoming committee. Mrs. Earle Cabell, wife of the Dallas mayor, presented Mrs. Kennedy with a bouquet of red roses. Then Kennedy broke from the official cluster and moved along the chain-link fence, smiling, shaking hands; letting people touch him.

At 11:55, two motorcycle police officers led the motorcade out of Love Field and turned left on Mockingbird Lane. Police Chief Curry drove the lead car. With him rode Dallas County Sheriff Bill Decker and two Secret Service agents. Then came three more motorcycles. Then the blue limousine with two Secret Service agents in the front, John and Nellie Connally in the jump seats and the Kennedys in the back seat. Two motorcycles flanked the car on each side. Next was another convertible, full of Kennedy aides and Secret Service agents, and four more agents standing on its running boards.

Then came the vice presidential convertible, carrying two Secret Service agents, the Johnsons and Yarborough. A Texas highway patrol officer and four Secret Service agents rode in the

next car. A press pool car, a press bus, convertibles bearing photographers, and cars carrying lesser dignitaries completed the procession.

The motorcade would move through a sizable portion of Dallas--along Mockingbird to Lemmon Avenue, right on Lemmon to Turtle Creek Boulevard, along Turtle Creek and Cedar Springs Road to Harwood Street, down Harwood to Main Street, where, at City Hall, it would turn right and move westward along Main through the downtown business district.

At the west end of downtown, it would turn right onto Houston Street and then immediately left onto Elm Street and move through the Triple Underpass. A few yards beyond the underpass, it would turn right again onto Stemmons Expressway and move to the Trade Mart at the intersection of Stemmons and Harry Hines Boulevard. After the President's speech, it would proceed out Harry Hines to Mockingbird, turn right, and return to Love Field.

The sidewalk crowds were sparse at first. A few people in the factories and offices along Mockingbird came out to have a look. The sun was bright now, and Mrs. Kennedy was regretting that she was wearing the pink wool suit. She had expected woolen weather. It was, after all, late November. She put on sunglasses, but her husband told her to take them off. The people wanted to see her, he said.

At the corner of Lemmon and Lomo Alto, a group of children held a long banner reading, "Please Stop and Shake Our Hands." Kennedy ordered his driver to stop. He got out and shook their hands. Farther along, he ordered another stop and got out to

greet a group of nuns. At Lee Park on Turtle Creek, the crowd began to thicken. And at Harwood and Live Oak, still two blocks from the turn onto Main, the people in the motorcade heard the downtown crowd murmuring like a distant tide.

When the caravan made the turn, it faced pandemonium. People were standing 10 and 12 deep on the sidewalks. Red, white and blue bunting fluttered from the buildings. People leaned out windows, waving and screaming. There were no picket signs, no sour faces. The feared Dallas crowd was friendly--even adoring. The nuts had stayed home. It was 12:21 p.m.

At the Trade Mart, the luncheon guests were showing their tickets to the door guards and filing to their seats. The huge building was surrounded by Dallas and Texas police, standing at parade rest, holding riot sticks, glaring at a handful of protesters. Inside the atrium hall, parakeets flew freely from tree to tree. A fountain splashed. An organist was practicing "Hail to the Chief." Dozens of yellow roses adorned the head table. The presidential seal had been mounted on the rostrum.

As the motorcade neared Houston Street, the size of the crowd diminished, but the cheers and applause were still hearty. Nellie Connally turned in her seat and said, "You can't say Dallas doesn't love you, Mr. President."

Kennedy replied, "No, you can't."

Workers from the Texas School Book Depository, the Dal-Tex Building and the Dallas County buildings lined the sidewalks at

Houston and Elm as the head of the motorcade turned toward the Triple Underpass. Others stood on the grass of Dealey Plaza. Many had brought their children to see the President. Several spectators noticed a man standing very still in a sixth-floor corner window of the depository. One man saw the rifle he was holding and assumed he was a Secret Service agent.

As the blue limousine made the sharp left turn from Houston onto Elm, the Hertz rental car time-and-temperature sign on the roof of the depository read 12:30. A Secret Service man in the motorcade radioed the Trade Mart: "Halfback to Base. Five minutes to destination." He wrote in his shift log: "12:35 p.m. President Kennedy arrived at Trade Mart."

Some thought the noises were firecrackers. Others thought a motorcycle was backfiring. Some recognized them as rifle shots. Pigeons flew from the roof of the depository. Kennedy lurched forward and grabbed his neck.

Sen. Yarborough, in the vice president's car, cried, "My God! They've shot the President!" Secret Service agent Rufus Youngblood climbed from the front seat to the back, threw Johnson to the floorboard and covered him with his own body.

In the blue limousine, Gov. Connally had been hit, too. He pitched forward and fell toward his wife. "No, no, no, no, no!" he screamed.

Then another shot. The President's head exploded. Blood spattered the occupants of the blue car. The first lady, in



shock, tried to climb out over the trunk. A Secret Service agent pushed her back. The car slowed and then lurched out of the motorcade line and sped past the Triple Underpass, with Chief Curry's car and the Secret Service car in pursuit.

UPI White House correspondent Merriman Smith was sitting in the middle of the front seat of the press pool car. He grabbed the mobile phone. He called the wire service's Dallas bureau and dictated the first bulletin: "Three shots were fired at President Kennedy's motorcade in downtown Dallas."

The cheers of greeting in Dealey Plaza rose to screams of horror and fear. "They killed him! They killed him! They killed him!" Parents grabbed children and ran. Men and women lay prostrate on the grass and sidewalks, as if dead. The motorcade was disintegrating, the cars veering hither and yon, trying to get through the crowd and follow the limousine. Helmeted police officers leaped from motorcycles, pulled guns, looked wildly about. The Hertz clock still read 12:30.

The staff at Parkland Memorial Hospital had only five minutes notice of the massive emergency rushing upon them, and many thought the message was a joke. When the blue car arrived, they weren't ready. No one was waiting at the emergency entrance. A Secret Service agent dashed inside to order stretchers.

Connally--whose wounds were serious but not fatal--was wheeled to Trauma Room No. 2, Kennedy to Trauma Room No. 1. Teams of surgeons and nurses went to work. The Secret Service regrouped around the Johnsons and hustled them to seclusion in another part

of the hospital. Reporters dashed around the halls and offices, searching for phones. Parkland patients heard the news and rushed to have a look.

"Gentlemen," a weeping Yarborough told reporters, "this has been a deed of horror. Excalibur has sunk beneath the waves." Mrs. Kennedy insisted on being in the trauma room with her husband. A nurse protested, but she was admitted.

Outside, more of the motorcade vehicles were arriving. Their passengers tumbled out and stared in horror at the blood-soaked convertible.

At 1 p.m., Dr. Kemp Clark, the senior physician working on the President, pronounced him dead. A priest administered last rites. At 1:13, the news was carried to the vice president. At 1:26, the Secret Service, fearing the assassination was part of a massive plot against the government, spirited the Johnsons away to unmarked cars and sped to Love Field. They boarded Air Force One at 1:33, while Kennedy press aide Malcolm Kilduff was announcing the President's death to the press.

Police were still combing the Dealey Plaza area for Kennedy's murderer. Indeed, only a minute after the fatal shot was fired, Marrion Baker, a Dallas motorcycle officer, had pointed his pistol at Lee Harvey Oswald. Baker had been riding by the Texas School Book Depository when the killing occurred, and he jumped off his motorcycle and dashed inside with Roy Truly, the building's superintendent. They encountered Oswald in the second-floor lunchroom. Baker drew his gun. "Do you know this

man?" he asked Truly. "Does he work here?" Truly said he did, and Baker let him go. A minute later, Oswald walked out the front door of the depository, where he encountered NBC reporter Robert MacNeil, who was looking for a phone. Oswald told him he could find one inside. Five minutes later, police sealed off the door.

At 12:44, Oswald boarded a bus at Elm and Murphy streets, seven blocks from the depository, but got off a few minutes later when the bus was caught in a traffic snarl. By 12:45, Dallas police had questioned the witness who had seen the man standing in the depository window with the rifle and had broadcast his description from a radio car in front of the depository. Two minutes later, Oswald caught a taxicab at the Greyhound bus station and rode to Beckley and Neely, a corner near his Oak Cliff rooming house. He went to his room, got a pistol and left again.

Meanwhile, Roy Truly had drawn up a list of depository employees and told police that Oswald was missing. At 1:12, sheriff's deputies found three empty cartridge cases near the sixth floor corner window. Ten minutes later, they would find the rifle, hidden between boxes of textbooks in the room.

At 1:15, Dallas officer J.D. Tippett was cruising by a drug store at 10th and Patton, less than a mile from the Oak Cliff rooming house, and spotted Oswald walking along the sidewalk. Tippett, for reasons never determined, pulled over and stopped him. Oswald jerked his pistol from under his jacket, shot four times and ran away. Nine people saw the shooting. A pickup truck driver took the dead officer's radio mike and said, "Hello,

police operator. We've had a shooting out here."

On Air Force One, stewards were removing some of the seats in the tail compartment to make room for President Kennedy's coffin. In the plane's stateroom, Lyndon Johnson was watching Walter Cronkite on television and was asking aides and congressmen whether he should be sworn in immediately or wait until they had returned to Washington. Some thought he should wait. Others thought it might be dangerous for the country to be without a President while he was en route. Johnson decided he would assume the office in Dallas. "Now," he said, "What about the oath?"

The aides and congressmen were embarrassed. They could remember neither the words nor where to find them. They couldn't remember who, besides Supreme Court justices, was authorized to administer the oath. Everyone was in such shock and confusion that phone calls were made to several Justice Department officials in Washington and Dallas before someone remembered that a President may be sworn in by any judge and that the oath is in the Constitution. Deputy Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach dictated it by phone from Washington, and U.S. District Judge Sarah Hughes, an old friend of Johnson who had been appointed to the North Texas federal bench by Kennedy, was dispatched to Love Field.

At 1:40, Lee Oswald ran into the Texas Theater on West Jefferson--eight blocks from officer Tippit's body--without buying a ticket. The box office attendant called the police. Cruisers began converging on the theater. At 1:50, the house

lights went up, and officers moved up and down the aisles, looked into the faces of the few patrons. Officer M.N. McDonald stopped at the 10th row and said to a man sitting alone: "Get up."

"Well, it's all over now," Oswald said, according to witnesses and he stood up. But when McDonald moved closer, Oswald struck him in the face and went for his pistol. McDonald struck back and grabbed for the gun. Oswald pulled the trigger, but the web of skin between McDonald's thumb and forefinger was caught under the hammer. The gun didn't fire. Other officers joined the fight. They subdued Oswald and hustled him out of the theater. "I protest this police brutality!" Oswald shouted.

Twenty-five minutes later, Capt. Will Fritz, chief of homicide, returned to the Police Department and ordered that the missing Texas School Book Depository worker named Lee Harvey Oswald be arrested as a suspect in the presidential killing. An officer pointed to a small young man with a bruised eye who was sitting in a chair. "There he sits," he said.

At Parkland, a Secret Service agent called Oneal's Funeral Home in Oak Lawn to order a casket. The funeral director, Vernon Oneal, arrived with it at 1:30. After the President's body had been placed in the casket, Mrs. Kennedy entered Trauma Room No. 1, took off her wedding ring and placed it on her husband's finger. The casket was closed and placed on a funeral home cart to be moved to the hearse.

Dr. Earl Rose, the Dallas County medical examiner, protested. Kennedy was a homicide victim, he said, and the body

couldn't be released legally until after an autopsy had been performed. A quarrel developed between him and the Secret Service. Kennedy aides and the Secret Service agents forced the casket through the crowd that had gathered at the hospital door and loaded it into the hearse. Mrs. Kennedy rode in the back with it. At 2:20, the dead President was carried up the stairs into Air Force One. Mrs. Kennedy retired to the bedroom.

Judge Hughes boarded the plane at 2:35 and was handed a small white card with the oath scrawled on it. Capt. Cecil Stoughton, an Army Signal Corps photographer, tried to arrange the crowd in the cramped stateroom so that he could take a picture of the ceremony. "We'll wait for Mrs. Kennedy," Johnson said. "I want her here."

Mrs. Kennedy came out of the bedroom still wearing the blood-soaked pink suit. Johnson pressed her hand and said, "This is the saddest moment of my life." The photographer placed her on Johnson's left, Lady Bird on his right. Judge Hughes, the first woman to administer the presidential oath, was shaking.

"What about a Bible?" asked one of the witnesses. Someone remembered that President Kennedy had kept a Bible in the bedroom and went to get it.

"I do solemnly swear..."

The oath lasted 28 seconds. At 2:38 p.m., Lyndon B. Johnson became the 36th President of the United States. The big jet's engines already were screaming. "Now, let's get airborne," he

said.

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