

# The Cornwall LOCAL

VOLUME LXXXVII. NO. 42

CORNWALL, NEW YORK

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 1963

## Cornwall Shares Nation's Shock And Grief at President's Death

### Stillmans See President in Houston, Texas

Probably the last Cornwall persons to see President Kennedy alive were Mr. and Mrs. Timothy Stillman of Maple Road.

In Houston, Texas on business last Thursday, Nov. 21, the Stillmans saw him drive by in a motorcade in that city. "We were impressed by the tremendous outpouring of people to see him," Mr. Stillman said on Tuesday, "Thousands were standing three and four hours before the President came past."

Like the rest of the nation, Texans were stunned by the assassination. More than once, Tim said he heard the same phrase. "This is the blackest day Texas history."

Their reactions to the murder of Oswald, the President's killer, were not experienced by the Stillmans at first hand because they flew back on Saturday.

Tim had one other feeling while he was at the Houston hotel where the President stayed:

he was conscious of "less security than on previous occasions that I had experienced with other presidents." There seemed to be less checking of persons than he had remembered from times when he had been near Presidents Eisenhower and Truman.

While in Houston, Tim and his wife were at the Rice Hotel where the President and Mrs. Kennedy stayed on Thursday night. The President had dinner in his suite there before attending the banquet of the League of Latin-American Citizens (where Mrs. Kennedy spoke briefly in Spanish) in the same hotel. Later the Presidential party went to the Thomas Testimonial Dinner at the Sam Houston Coliseum.

The Coliseum was the same building where Tim had been working on plans and arrangements for the convention of the International Association of Fire Chiefs that will take place there in October 1964.



**JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY**  
1917-1963

IN MEMORIAM  
by  
Msgr. George A. Rosso

On Friday, November 22, 1963, at 1400 hours the nation was stunned by the news: THE PRESIDENT IS DEAD - the victim of an assassin's bullet. All the stuff of tragic drama was there. He was young - as presidents go - with his career still green and unspent. The years with their relentless caravan of care and sorrow had not yet time to press him down. He lived with his eyes on a star and he moved in the warm environs of his beloved family and of deep international friendships - patriotically proud of his country's office as president. The present was happy, the future lengthening out into rosy vistas. Then, quickly it was over - a staccato rifle crack - and a president slumped into the arms of his beloved wife. How banal seem the instruments of glory and death...a rifle bullet here; rude beams and nails for Christ; and iron grate for Stephen; a stone tomahawk for Jogues; a sword stroke for Agnes.

There is no way within our limited devisement to fully understand the assassination for President Kennedy. We seek only an adequate comprehension of what has happened so that with the buttressing of faith we may discern in this great national sorrow some feeble rhyme and reason that time and prayer will swell to proportions of spiritual acquiescence and resignation. On this spiritual note we will briefly examine a single instance of notable acquiescence in the life of John F. Kennedy.

In the workings of the political and governmental scene we often forget that all power comes from Almighty God, and the mandate of an elective office is delegated by Him through and by the will of the people. Two years, ten months and twenty-three days ago John F. Kennedy acquiesced to the will of the people, and in his oath of office called upon Almighty God to assist him with the awful responsibilities of one who had accepted a mandate to dispense the laws of our land. Those years may summed up in his own words: "ASK NOT WHAT YOUR COUNTRY CAN DO FOR YOU, ASK WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR YOUR COUNTRY."

When a President walks from his inaugural to the White House the implications of his oath in terms of his office become concrete. Mr. Kennedy's presidential career was very brief, but we might remember that Christ's was also... barely a matter of three years. The yield of those years cannot be reckoned by the calendar or by the hour glass. If there had been but a single law passed, and a single welfare program accepted, and a single war averted, his presidency would have been fulfilled. These are not concepts that can be measured by clocks or other devices in which temporalities are evaluated...these are stupendous facts touched with God's Infinity, accomplished by His will through the medium of man.

We have examined briefly one mandate in the life of John F. Kennedy, his acceptance of the Presidency. We all believe there is another and final one - whose stage was a cheering group of people along a motorcade route and the harsh, staccato not of a rifle. Prosaic rude vagaries that have occurred before and may occur again. Whatever brief and aborted prayer leaped to the President's lips in that last moment of life, or whatever unspoken thought gathered in his heart in the second's flash, if they could be recovered for mortal ears and distilled to their minutest essence, would fall into the simple words, "I accept your mandate, O God."

May his valiant soul rest with those who have gone before him.

The people in town who happened to have television or radio turned on last Friday afternoon were the first to hear the shocking news that President Kennedy had been shot.

The bad news travelled fast.

Friends were telephoned and they in turn called others. By two o'clock everyone who could get near a radio or television was hanging on the minute-by-minute news reports that grew more grim and hopeless each second. In between reports about the President, came the news of Governor Connolly's shooting. Once a broadcaster said that Vice-president Johnson had also been shot, but this was denied after a few minutes. By two twenty-five the news was definite: the President was dead.

Stunned and anguished, people moved to their daily tasks in trance-like fashion almost refusing to believe what they had heard. When the awful truth of the assassination was confirmed, the disbelief turned to horror, then to grief and shame.

Everywhere in town people needing the comfort of others stopped to talk - on the street, in stores, in homes, on the phone "What is this country coming to?" "It can't be true - that fine, vigorous young man cut down." In Cocks' Store, Ernie had received the news by phone from Charlie who was home on his noon hour. A group of women were at the check-out desk and when Ernie relayed the message somebody said, "President who?" his reply, "Kennedy" brought expressions of unbelief from a truck driver who was manking deliveries, came through the door at that moment and confirmed it.

Mrs. Lee Toon was on her way to teach a dancing class when her husband called from Governor's Island to say, "The President died." Thinking that it was ex-President Hoover to who her husband is an aide, she expressed her sympathy and then said she was on her way to class. Just as she got in her car, the thought crossed her mind, "He must have meant Hoover," but she turned on the car radio and received the shocking correction. "By the time I got to the West Point gates," Mrs. Toon said, "I was shaking."

The Cornwall Weavers were having lunch at one of the members homes. A telephone call from a friend dropped the news like a bombshell into what was to have been a pleasant afternoon.

In Cornwall High School, supervising Principal Thomas D. Shost was observing Mr. Kevin Hayter's English class. Part way through the period his secretary came in and whispered, "The President has been shot in Texas." Mr. Shot said, "Is it true?" She answered, "Yes and I think it's serious." After she left the principal heard the sound of a muffled radio from Miss Chatfield's class and he went out in the hall where he could hear the sorrowful reports. Then he returned to Mr. Hayter's class, let it continue to the end and when the bell rang, made the announcement. The pupils stood blinking and stunned.

As there was only one period left in the school day and both teachers and students were upset, school was dismissed. The band concert scheduled for Friday night was cancelled; basketball practice was not held and the basketball game with Chester was cancelled.

Standing at his office window watching the students leave quietly for home, Mr. Shost noticed a simple but touching episode. One of the boys who was leaving through the doors near the library noticed that the flag was still at full mast and he went over to lower it to half mast. As he was doing so, Sgt. Alfred Zubiller drove up, got out of his car and stood at attention with his hat on his chest.

The news first reached the ele-

mentary schools when Mrs. Ronald Young, wife of the principal of Cornwall-on-Hudson School, called to ask if the school had a radio turned on and explained why. Lacking a P.A. system, Mrs. Young notified all the teachers who in turn told their classes. He also called Robert Mertens, principal of the Canterbury School who had not heard the news previously. In both schools the children who were old enough to understand, were bewildered by the news. As the news broke just about regular dismissal time, the children left quietly - and some, tearfully.

As the impact of the news began to take effect, Cornwall like the rest of the nation cancelled its public and social activities. The Town Board postponed the special meeting on the Firth Water District; the trustees and Dr. B. Shapiro of the Museum of the Cornwall Countryside postponed the dedication of the new building on the Boulevard from last Saturday to December 7. The Cornwall Methodist Church put off its annual Fair and dinner for two weeks. The Mountainville Grange postponed its "Penny Social" to this Saturday.

Families and friends gathered near television and radio to watch the events unfold with poignant clarity in front of the penetrating cameras.

Saturday's mood matched that of the nation - it was cloudy and rainy and depressing. The flag at the Town Hall responded sharply to the gusts of November wind as if reluctant to remain at the symbolic half-mast. All over town homeowners displayed the colors in respect of sorrow for the occasion.

On Sunday, a nation that was beginning to grasp the full import of Friday's tragedy, turned out in large numbers for church services. Many of the Cornwall churches modified and changed their order of service to meet the turn of events. The Cornwall Methodist Church held a special memorial service at 8 o'clock on Sunday evening; St. John's Episcopal Church met at 10 a.m. on Monday morning; the Cornwall Presbyterian held a Monday noon service; the Canterbury Presbyterian church which had changed its Sunday service into a memorial was open all day Monday for prayer and meditation; St. Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Church held two special masses on Monday at 12 noon and 6 p.m.; the Cornwall Baptist Church had a special memorial service at 10 a.m. on Monday; the Mountainville Methodist Church was open for prayer and meditation all day Sunday and Monday.

When the slaying of Lee Oswald was caught by the nation's television's cameras (and tel-star, in addition) shortly after noon, already subdued people were shaken by the second brutality within two days. Many Cornwall persons were at their TV sets when the shooting occurred and watched the violence with horror and disbelief.

Early on Monday morning Supervisor Gordon K. Cameron received a telegram from Governor Rockefeller making the day a legal holiday but the schools had already announced their closings; the post offices and bank did not open and the business had decided to close from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. At noon there were only one or two cars parked on Main Street and scarcely a person was visible. Like the rest of the country, Cornwall participated via television and radio in the solemn funeral ceremonies that marked the death of the 35th President of the United States.

Perhaps never before, had a nation felt so unified as it was by its sudden grief.

### Supervisor and Mayor Express Their Sorrow

All of Cornwall was benumbed by the news of the assassination of President Kennedy last Friday and expressed their grief in prayer and to each other.

Official statements were given by the supervisor and the mayor on Monday. Supervisor Gordon K. Cameron issued the following statement: "John F. Kennedy's passing from the American scene is a tragedy shared by all, for no freedom-loving citizen could fail to be numbed by the evil deed that brought about the President's untimely death.

In a little less than three years in our country's highest office, Mr. Kennedy left the indelible stamp of his personality and leadership on the pages of our country's history. John F. Kennedy stood for the finest in the American way of life, for total dedication of body, mind, and spirit to the betterment of his

land and his people.

Truly, Mr. Kennedy leaves a high set of standards for every American to emulate. Let us all pray that this man's personal sacrifices leads not to further hate fostered bitterness but rather to a re-appraisal of national conscience in seeking the answers to the awesome problems America faces during these troubled times."

Dr. Michael Donahue, mayor of Cornwall-on-Hudson issued the following statement:

"I was deeply shocked by the sudden and horrible death of President Kennedy last Friday afternoon. With sincere Christian faith, I believe that when one door closes another opens. Let us hope and pray that through this opened door will come peace instead of strife, love instead of hate."

### The Governor Declared Nov. 25 Legal Holiday

On Monday morning, Nov. 25, Supervisor Camecon received the following telegram from the Governor declaring the day a legal holiday:

Albany, N.Y.:

Please be advised that by proclamation dated Nov. 24, it is decreed that Monday, November 25, shall be a day of general prayer and general religious ob-

servance. The effect of this proclamation is to make Monday, November 25th, a legal holiday in New York State. All local governments are invited to take steps to insure the fullest possible public participation in this homage to our late president, John F. Kennedy.

Nelson A. Rockefeller,  
Governor of New York

## 50 years ago...

These stories all appeared on Page 1 of The Cornwall Local, Nov. 28, 1963. They were retyped because we have changed the width of our paper and its columns.

In 1963, the Local was published on Thursdays. The issue describing Pres. Kennedy's death came out on Nov. 28, which was Thanksgiving -- the same as this year.

There was a picture of the late president at the top of the page. We have replaced it with a photograph from the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum in Boston.

The wider front page of yesteryear included a few items that were not linked to the assassination -- a garbage truck turned over on Route 9W, the Town Board rescheduled a water district meeting, and the museum on the Boulevard was due to dedicate its Natural History Wing.

You can see the local news at the time of the president's death by turning to "This Week in Cornwall" on page 4. You can turn to page 6A to see how strangers communicated with one another on the day of the shooting.