

WE INTERRUPT THIS BROADCAST

THE SHOT THAT CHANGED AMERICA

IT WAS 50 YEARS AGO, ON NOVEMBER 22, 1963, THAT JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY WAS ASSASSINATED IN DALLAS, TEXAS. TO THIS DAY, THOSE GUNSHOTS RESONATE AROUND THE WORLD. **CHRIS WRIGHT** TAKES US THROUGH THE FATEFUL DAYS IN QUESTION, SET IN THE CONTEXT OF A VIBRANT AND UNSETTLED YEAR

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

KENNEDY

THEN-SENATOR JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY SPEAKING ON HIS CAMPAIGN TOUR. HE EVENTUALLY WON THE ELECTION AND WAS SWORN IN AS PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES ON JANUARY 20, 1961



PHOTO: CORBIS

ABOVE: AT THE AGE OF 43, KENNEDY WAS THE YOUNGEST PERSON TO BE ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

JANUARY-
OCTOBER
1963

It is tempting to look back on 1963 as a halcyon time presided over by a much-loved US president. Yet the true picture was nowhere near as clear.

Kennedy had been sworn in as the 35th President of the United States on January 20, 1961. Since that day, his presidency had been dominated not by harmony but by confrontation, chiefly with the Soviet Union. These were the early salvos of what we would come to know as the Cold War. In particular, in April 1962 he authorised the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion in an attempt to overthrow the government of Fidel Castro, because it was considered sympathetic to the Russians. Members of the invading force were either killed or captured, and it would take Kennedy the best part of two years to negotiate the release of the 1,189 survivors — in exchange for US\$53 million worth of food and medicine.

Then in October 1962 came the Cuban Missile Crisis. The situation had escalated after it became clear the Soviets were

building ballistic missile sites in Cuba; the event is considered by many to be the closest the world has come to nuclear war.

As 1963 began, tensions with Premier Nikita Khrushchev's Soviet Union had at least declined, but for the US there were plenty of other problems, both at home and abroad.

Domestically, the year up until November would be dominated by Kennedy's civil rights struggle. In February, he announced his plans for new legislation, ensuring that all black Americans would have the right to vote, discrimination would be outlawed, and segregation — the practice of keeping black and white people separate, with black facilities always greatly inferior to white — would be ended.

"Legislation was necessary because without it, nothing had changed since emancipation 100 years before," writes Andrew Cook in his book *1963*. "Black children were growing up with the prospect of radically lower earnings, poorer health, inferior education and shorter lives than whites born at the same time."

It seems obscene today, but one speech from January 14 of that year gives a sense of just what Kennedy was up against. "Segregation now, segregation tomorrow, and segregation forever." The speaker was not some ignored lunatic-fringe bigot, but George C Wallace, the governor of Alabama, and he was making his inaugural speech to the entire state. Five months later Wallace would block the door of the University of Alabama to protest against integration, although progress would eventually get him out of the way, when James Hood and Vivian Malone became the first African-Americans to enroll.

Kennedy introduced his Civil Rights Bill to Congress in June. No decision had been made on it by August, when the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom took place in the nation's capital. According to some accounts 300,000 people, including families with children, made their way to the Lincoln Memorial. "They walked peacefully in their Sunday best to spirituals sung by Mahalia Jackson and Marion Anderson, and responded to the speeches

with applause and cheers," one account says. One of the speeches in question, on August 28, would become one of the most famous in history: Martin Luther King's "I have a dream".

King's dream must have still seemed distant at the time: in April, he had been arrested with many others in Birmingham, Alabama for parading without a permit. A few weeks after that, hundreds of African-Americans, including children, were arrested in the same place for protesting against segregation. And, after King's Washington speech, things would get much worse before they got better. On September 15, the 16th Street Baptist Church, again in Birmingham, was firebombed, killing four and injuring 22.

For his work for black America, Kennedy was loved and loathed in equal measure, with many in the South in particular despising him. And this was not all on his plate: other events in the year varied from the very positive — his

AS 1963 BEGAN, TENSIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION HAD AT LEAST DECLINED, BUT THERE WERE PLENTY OF OTHER PROBLEMS, AT HOME AND ABROAD

renowned "Ich bin ein Berliner" speech in West Berlin on June 26, and a Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty between the US, the UK and the Soviet Union in August — to the bad, with the seeds being sown of the United States' engagement in Vietnam.

Today, Johnson and Nixon are the US presidents most commonly associated with the escalation of war in Vietnam, but in truth, the engagement there started with Kennedy, when American advisors began to be sent in to South Vietnam as concerns grew of a spreading

Communist presence. The "advisors" were in fact special forces and CIA intelligence, and from 1962, the United States would start supplying them helicopters and armoured personnel carriers in force.

Early in 1963, at Ap Tan Thoi, the Americans sought to use 10 helicopters to bring the South Vietnamese force into an area where the Viet Cong were thought to be, but as they dropped the troops in what they thought was a quiet area,

"THE YEAR 1963 WAS TO BE THE SEMINAL YEAR WHEN MOST OF THE THINGS WE NOW ASSOCIATE WITH THE SWINGING SIXTIES REALLY BEGAN"

the Viet Cong opened fire and brought down four helicopters. This became known as the Battle of Ap Bac.

"Ap Bac demonstrated that Diem's lacklustre army was not competent enough to destroy a resurgent Viet Cong, particularly in the Mekong River Delta and Vietnam's many miles of remote forest," writes Cook of the surprise response. "For the Americans, it would lead to massive troop commitments in Vietnam and the paralysis of the Johnson Administration from its first to last day."

Meanwhile, Kennedy's brother Robert (commonly known as Bobby), the Attorney General, had confronted organised crime, and on March 21, closed the now-legendary Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary.

Around the Kennedys, culture too was changing. "The year 1963 was to be the seminal year when most of the things we now associate with the Swinging Sixties really began," writes Cook. The Beatles

recorded their debut album, *Please Please Me*, in a single session on February 11; their second, *With The Beatles*, was released on November 22, a day now famous for much darker reasons. *Dr No*, the first James Bond film, was released in the United States in May, and the second, *From Russia With Love*, opened in London in October. In Britain, where *That Was The Week That Was* introduced satire to mainstream TV, even the scandal of the year looked cool: the Profumo Scandal, which eventually unseated Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, centred around the gorgeous and glamorous Christine Keeler.

On June 16, half a world away, Soviet cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova became the first woman in space, on the Vostok 6 mission. Two years after Kennedy's speech committing the US to put a man on the moon by the end of the decade, America still seemed well behind in the space race — but that dream at least would outlive the president.

CONSPIRACY THEORIES

SOME OF THE CONSPIRACY THEORIES ABOUT THE ASSASSINATION INCLUDE: CASTRO AND THE CUBANS DID IT; THE SOVIETS DID IT; THE CIA DID IT; THE MOB DID IT. EACH OF THESE HAS HAD MUCH WRITTEN IN THEIR SUPPORT.

WRITER LAMAR WALDRON, FOR EXAMPLE, HAS SPENT 20 YEARS ON THE MOB THEORY, PUBLISHING TWO BOOKS ON IT. HE ARGUES THAT THE KENNEDYS PLANNED TO STAGE A COUP AGAINST FIDEL CASTRO IN CUBA ON DECEMBER 1, 10 DAYS AFTER THE DALLAS TRIP, AND THAT THREE MAFIA BOSSES INFILTRATED THE PLAN. HE SAYS THE THREE BOSSES ALL MADE CREDIBLE CONFESSIONS LATER IN LIFE.

OSWALD HAD CLEARLY INTERACTED WITH THE SOVIETS (HE DEFECTED TO RUSSIA BEFORE MOVING BACK), THE CUBANS (THROUGH HIS MEMBERSHIP OF THE FAIR PLAY FOR CUBA COMMITTEE), AND INDEED US STATE AGENCIES, HAVING BEEN MONITORED BY THE FBI FOR SOME TIME. EMPLOYEES OF THE CIA'S TOKYO STATION LATER SAID IT WAS COMMON KNOWLEDGE THAT OSWALD HAD GONE TO RUSSIA ON THE CIA'S BEHALF



KENNEDY SPEAKING AT A PRESS CONFERENCE ON NOVEMBER 2, 1962. HE TOLD JOURNALISTS THAT THERE WAS EVIDENCE THAT SOVIET MISSILE BASES IN CUBA WERE BEING DISMANTLED ABOVE: A GROUP OF FIDEL CASTRO'S SOLDIERS AFTER THE US-BACKED INVASION AT THE BAY OF PIGS. IN CUBA, WAS ROUTED

PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES (TOP); CORBIS (RIGHT); LEE HARVEY OSWALD



On November 2, South Vietnamese president Ngo Dinh Diem was assassinated following a military coup, and on November 6, General Duong Van Minh took over as leader of South Vietnam. Although Kennedy couldn't yet know it, a full war with American involvement was about to escalate in Vietnam.

As for Kennedy himself, around this time he was preparing for a potentially worrying three-day trip to Texas. In all of the United States, this was perhaps the state in which resentment of Kennedy was thought to be the most virulent, and security preparations were intense. On November 21, the president and his entourage — including his wife, Jackie Kennedy — arrived in Houston, spending the night in Fort Worth.

The following account is drawn from a range of different sources, but follows approximately the official line of the assassination as examined by the Warren Commission, which was appointed to investigate. In particular, our principal source is *Reclaiming History*, an extraordinary, million-word examination of the assassination by Vincent Bugliosi, and his subsequent 500-page distillation, *Four Days in November*. Bugliosi, a lawyer by trade, put such immense effort into this that it even converted some conspiracy theorists. Vince Palamara, a Secret Service expert and long-standing conspiracy theorist, said the book was "a devastating knockout blow to those who, like me, once believed there was a conspiracy in the death of JFK". He added, "It is time to get a life, America: Oswald did indeed kill Kennedy, acting alone." But still, not everyone is convinced.

THE CAST OF THE DRAMA

THE PERSONS OF INTEREST, AND THEIR JOBS AND LOCATIONS AT THE TIME OF SHOOTING



JOHN F. KENNEDY
35TH PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

Back seat of the presidential limousine on the way to downtown Dallas, turning off Main Street, into Dealey Plaza



JACKIE KENNEDY
FIRST LADY

Seated next to her husband



LEE HARVEY OSWALD
SHOOTER

Corner of sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository Building on 411 Elm Street, Dallas



LYNDON JOHNSON
US VICE-PRESIDENT AND LATER, 36TH PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

Seated in the vice-presidential limousine, which is behind the presidential limo



JOHN CONNALLY
TEXAS GOVERNOR

Seated in front of the Kennedys in the presidential limo, with his wife, Nellie



RALPH YARBOROUGH
TEXAS SENATOR

Seated with the Johnsons in the vice-presidential limousine, behind the presidential car



7.20am Lee Harvey Oswald leaves the house where his Russian wife, Marina, is staying with their young children in Irving, Texas. Wesley Frazier works with him at the Texas School Book Depository, a company based at 411 Elm Street in Dallas that stores and ships school textbooks. Frazier gives him a ride in to work. He sees Oswald is carrying a long, light brown paper package. When Frazier asks, Oswald tells him it is curtain rods.

★ **7.30am** US President John F Kennedy is awoken by his valet George Thomas in Suite 850 of the Texas Hotel, Fort Worth.

▶ **8am** Oswald and Frazier arrive at the Depository Building. Later today, the president's motorcade will pass right in front of it.

8.30am Kennedy is briefed by Brigadier General Godfrey McHugh with CIA reports on Saigon, Cyprus and Korea. Kennedy looks at the metropolitan dailies, which are filled with articles about squabbles in the Texas Democratic Party, as well as coverage of the president's visit. Dallas police chief Jesse Curry is quoted on the efforts being made, saying 350 police officers — a third of his force — would be assigned to Kennedy's guard. (Bugliosi says in total 447 Dallas police officers were assigned to the president's visit, 178 of them on the motorcade route.)

The *Dallas Morning News* front-page article a few days earlier had been captioned: "Incident-free day urged for JFK visit." It will not prove to be an incident-free day. More prophetically, a full-page ad in today's edition is entitled "Welcome Mr Kennedy to



PHOTO: CORREIS

Dallas," accompanied by vitriolic complaint and accusation, all presented within a funereal black border.

Kennedy, dealing with a rift in the local party between Texas Governor John Connally, Texas senator Ralph Yarborough and US Vice-President Lyndon Johnson (also from Texas), calls his political advisor to sort out the mess. He orders Yarborough and Johnson to ride together in one limousine; Connally will be riding with the president.

8.50am Kennedy walks to the parking lot beneath the hotel, where up to 5,000 people are waiting in the drizzle. "There are no faint hearts in Fort Worth," he tells them. Kennedy then goes to a formal breakfast.

9.20am Jackie Kennedy, the First Lady and by far the most revered and adored person in America, arrives at the breakfast to a standing ovation. She is a vast part of Kennedy's appeal, and he knows and appreciates it. The *Associated Press* says, "She drew crowds by the thousands and became a goodwill ambassador for America on her own." Barnstorming speeches follow.

10.30am Although Fort Worth and Dallas are barely 48 kilometres apart, a distance that can be driven in half an hour, the decision has been made to fly there on Air Force One, partly because of the positive TV coverage that comes with disembarking from the

ABOVE: DEALEY PLAZA, IN DALLAS, WAS TO BECOME THE SCENE OF THE CRIME. THE TEXAS BOOK DEPOSITORY BUILDING, IN WHICH OSWALD LAY IN WAIT, IS PICTURED LEFT

famous plane. The entourage, including the Kennedys, Johnson and many others, is prepared and heads off for the airport in nearby Carswell just after 11am, and the flight (with Johnson in a separate plane) takes off at 11.25am, landing at Love Field, just north of Dallas, at 11.40am. Bugliosi notes that, in order to make for better TV, the vice-president's plane is unloaded first, so that Johnson and his wife can be seen to be greeting the Kennedys at the bottom of the ramp, "as though they hadn't just left them a quarter hour earlier in Fort Worth".

11.45am The presidential limousine is ready to go. Bill Greer, the president's driver and a member of the Secret Service, is at the wheel. The car, a 1961 Lincoln Continental convertible, weighs 3.4 tonnes because of its heavy armour — it has to be ferried around the country in a C-130 military transport plane — but is open and will not today use a bubble-top, as Kennedy prefers to be more clearly visible to the crowds if the weather is clear (which, after a bleak start, it now proves to be). The car has running boards for Secret Service agents to stand on along the side and at the back, but Kennedy does not want these used today.

11.50am Most of the staff of the Book Depository head downstairs for lunch. Oswald is seen by a colleague, Charles Givens, on the fifth floor, and asks for an elevator to be sent back up to him. Having shaken hands with the official welcoming party, the Kennedys turn towards cheering crowds at the airport fence. Kennedy and Jackie, who is in a pink suit now and holding a bouquet of red roses, shake hands with dozens of people, surrounded by nervous Secret Service men. However, in the crowd are placards, too: "YANKEE GO HOME." "YOU'RE A TRAITOR." Greer starts following the president along the fence in his car.

Finally they get into the car, with Connally and his wife, Nellie, seated in front of the Kennedys.

11.55am The motorcade leaves Love Field airport en route to a planned stop at Trade Mart 15 kilometres away. It leaves through an opening in the airport fence that has been opened just for this visit, after which it heads towards downtown Dallas: down Cedar Springs, to Harwood, to Main, to Elm, under the Triple Underpass, and out to the Mart. It is a huge motorcade: first a so-called pilot car, scouting the route several hundred metres ahead, followed by eight police motorcycles, then the lead car, containing police chief Curry. Then comes the presidential limousine with four motorcycle escorts, then a Secret Service follow-up car, then the vice-presidential limousine containing Johnson and Yarborough, another Secret Service follow-up car, then a string of other vehicles with more dignitaries, the press, cameramen, congressmen, military and Air Force aides, an entire press bus, physicians, personal secretaries, and a lot more police motorcycles. Jackie goes to put her sunglasses on — her husband asks her not to, so they don't look too aloof.

12.00pm Givens at the Book Depository realises he has left his cigarettes in the pocket of his jacket upstairs, and takes the lift. He retrieves them and sees Oswald, now on the sixth floor. Oswald asks him to close the west elevator gate. Givens then heads out, but three colleagues, Bonnie Ray Williams, Harold Norman and James Jarman, go up to the fifth floor for a better view of the motorcade.

12.06pm Kennedy asks the motorcade to stop so he can speak to some children. Then he does so again a few blocks further on.

12.15pm Waiting for the motorcade on Houston Street, near Dealey Plaza, Arnold Rowland sees a man holding a high-powered rifle across his chest in the window on the sixth floor of the Depository. Believing him to be a Secret Service man, Rowland goes to point

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WILL FRITZ
POLICE CAPTAIN
Not present at the scene of crime, but Fritz was one of the lead investigators



ABRAHAM ZAPRUDE
DRESSMAKER
Recorded the infamous video of the assassination on his new eight-millimetre Bell and Howell camera



WESLEY FRAZIER
COLLEAGUE OF OSWALD AT THE BOOK DEPOSITORY
Gave Oswald a ride to work. Noted that Oswald was carrying a long, light brown paper package with him



ROY KELLERMAN
SENIOR SECRET SERVICE AGENT
Seated in the front passenger seat of the presidential limousine



BILL GREER
SECRET SERVICE AGENT, DRIVER OF PRESIDENTIAL LIMOUSINE
Seated in the driver's seat of the limo, to Kellerman's left



CLINT HILL
SECRET SERVICE AGENT
Standing on the running board of the follow-up car behind the presidential limo

him out to his wife, but he can no longer see him.

12.20pm As the motorcade gets closer to downtown and the building heights increase, the police find it harder and harder to keep people off the streets and out of the way of the motorcade. Yet still, the mood appears friendly.

► **12.23pm** The motorcade enters the densest crowds, on Main Street. Connally believes it looks like a quarter of a million people are watching. Greer slows the limousine to a crawl. A teenage

THERE IS A SHOT, BUT NOT EVERYBODY HEARS IT: SOME THINK IT IS THE SOUND OF A SPUTTERING MOTORCYCLE

boy rushes from the crowd holding a camera and chases the president's car; he is promptly jumped on by a Secret Service agent in the follow-up car.

Howard Brennan, on the corner of Houston and Elm, spots several people in the windows of the Depository: three black men on the fifth floor hanging out of the windows, and a man on his own sitting on the window sill of the sixth.

12.25pm A Dallas dressmaker called Abraham Zapruder decides on the right spot to set up his new eight-millimetre Bell and Howell movie camera.

12.28pm The pilot car, red lights stridently flashing, sweeps off Main onto Houston Street, and into Dealey Plaza.

12.29pm The motorcade moves into Dealey Plaza. Nellie Connally turns to the president and says, "They can't make you believe now that there are not some in Dallas who love you and appreciate you, can they?" Kennedy replies, "No, they sure can't." These may be his last words.



THE PRESIDENT AND FIRST LADY EXIT THE TEXAS HOTEL FOLLOWING THE FORMAL FORT WORTH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BREAKFAST ON THE FATEFUL MORNING

COULD OSWALD HAVE MADE THOSE SHOTS?



CRITICS SAY THAT THOUGH THE TARGET WAS NEVER MORE THAN 82 METRES FROM OSWALD, IT WAS MOVING; THE CAR WAS OBSCURED FOR SOME OF THE TIME BY AN OAK TREE; AND OSWALD WAS USING AN UNIMPRESSIVE RIFLE NOT KNOWN FOR ACCURACY. THE WARREN COMMISSION, USING EXPERT RIFLEMEN FROM BOTH THE US ARMY AND THE FBI, COULD NOT REPLICATE HIS SPEED AND ACCURACY IN TESTS. OSWALD HAD SERVED IN THE MARINES AND WAS TESTED TWICE IN RIFLE MARKSMANSHIP, ONCE SCORING 212 OUT OF 250, AND ONCE 191. LIEUTENANT COLONEL ALLISON FOLSOM, INTERPRETING THIS FOR THE WARREN COMMISSION, AGREED WITH HIS QUESTIONER THAT OSWALD WAS "NOT A PARTICULARLY OUTSTANDING SHOT".

THERE IS ALSO THE ISSUE OF SPEED. A MANNLICHER-CARCANO RIFLE IS VERY HARD TO RELOAD, AND SOME BELIEVE IT WOULD HAVE BEEN IMPOSSIBLE TO FIRE THREE SHOTS FROM IT IN THE TIME THAT OSWALD HAD, REGARDLESS OF ACCURACY

As the motorcade takes the slow corner at Elm and Houston, Abraham Zapruder starts filming.

★ **12.30pm** There is a shot, but not everybody hears it: some think it is the sound of a sputtering motorcycle. Some will later say they see sparks fly off the far left hand lane of the road, behind the presidential limousine. Some agents hear it clearly: Paul Landis, on the right running board of the follow-up car, hears it, looks behind him and draws his gun. Rufus Youngblood, another Secret Service man, riding with the vice-president, tells Johnson to get down. Connally, a lifelong hunter, is certain it is a high-powered rifle shot and looks over his right shoulder. Realising what is happening, he shouts, "Oh no, no, no!" Jackie Kennedy, hearing him, turns towards him.

James Worrell Jr is standing in front of the Book Depository and, when he hears the first shot, looks straight up and sees six inches (15 centimetres) of gun barrel from a high window.

Brennan, who had seen the men in the building earlier, looks up and sees the man in the sixth floor window aiming a rifle straight down Elm Street towards the presidential limousine. He fires again.

12.30pm A second shot is fired. On the fifth floor of the Depository, where three workers are watching the view, it is so loud that the windows rattle and loose plaster falls from the ceiling on to Bonnie Ray Williams' hair.

The president visibly stiffens, his elbows rise up high and his hands move towards his throat. In the follow-up car behind him agent Glen Bennett shouts, "He's hit!" Agent Clint Hill jumps off the running board of the follow-up car and runs for the president's limousine. Roy Kellerman, who is in the president's car sitting next to Greer, turns back and believes he hears the president say "My God, I am hit!" though nobody

else in the car hears this. Connally, meanwhile, who is seated in front of Kennedy, is in the middle of turning around when he feels a hard blow in his own back. His chest is covered in blood. His wife, Nellie, pulls him into her arms, and puts her head down over his.

Jackie turns to her husband. Kellerman, in the front seat, turns to Greer, who in turning to look over the shoulder has actually slowed the car down. "Let's get out of here. We're hit," Kellerman tells Greer. Too late.

James Worrell Jr, still looking up, sees flame and smoke come from the barrel of the gun he can see.

12.30pm A third shot, and Abraham Zapruder captures its results in horrifying detail. The right side of the president's head explodes and a pink mist fills the air. Jackie is 15 centimetres away and looking straight at him when it hits. His body bounces off the back of the seat and topples onto her. Connally hears her shout, "They've killed my husband. I have his brains in my hand."

Jackie Kennedy, in shock and in an action she will never remember, starts crawling out of the back of the car, as if to go off the end. Secret Service agent Hill, who was on the car behind, reaches a handhold on the back of the car and pushes the first lady back in to her seat. He hangs on to the back as the limousine picks up speed.

Zapruder keeps filming as the limousine disappears under the Triple Underpass.

12.31pm Greer floors the accelerator and the car speeds away, too late. Hill, still hanging on the back, can see a chunk of Kennedy's head with hair on it on the seat. He realises that Connally is hit too. Jackie is cradling her husband, whimpering. They head for Parkland Memorial Hospital, about six and a half kilometres from Dealey Plaza. On the Stemmons Freeway en route, they will hit almost 145 kilometres per hour.



ABOVE: ACROSS THE GLOBE, THE PRESIDENT'S ASSASSINATION MADE FRONT-PAGE NEWS
RIGHT: OSWALD, PICTURED HOLDING TWO MARXIST NEWSPAPERS AND A MANNLICHER-CARCANO RIFLE THAT HAS MARKINGS MATCHING THOSE ON THE WEAPON FOUND IN THE DEPOSITORY BUILDING AFTER KENNEDY'S ASSASSINATION

Already, there is confusion about where the shots have come from. Some police head for the overpass, others for the Depository Building. Some say the shots came from behind a white fence on what will

is loaded onto one, with Connally, drifting in and out of consciousness, in the other.

12.38pm Kennedy is logged into an emergency room.

12.39pm Oswald gets onto a bus.

12.40pm CBS is showing *As the World Turns*, a soap opera. Actress Helen Wagner says to fellow actor Santos Ortega, "And I gave it a great deal of thought, Grandpa." At that moment, a blank screen appears with the words "CBS NEWS" and

ALREADY, THERE IS CONFUSION ABOUT WHERE THE SHOTS HAVE COME FROM. SOME POLICE HEAD FOR THE OVERPASS, OTHERS FOR THE DEPOSITORY BUILDING. THERE IS CHAOS, ABSOLUTE PANDEMONIUM

become known as the Grassy Knoll. There is chaos, absolute pandemonium, in Dealey Plaza.

Journalists in the following cars are largely in the dark about what has happened, but the first report comes from Merriman Smith, who works for United Press International and is in the front seat of the press pool car with access to the car's only radio telephone — to the considerable distress of his rival from the Associated Press, Jack Bell, who is sitting behind him. Smith's report says, "Three shots were fired at President Kennedy's motorcade in downtown Dallas." Symptomatic of the great confusion at the time, he reports that there are "no casualties". The story flashes at 12.34pm and the entire country begins to grind to a halt as the word spreads.

Officer Marrion Baker is the first policeman to go in to the Depository, quickly grabbing the building superintendent Roy Truly. At the second floor landing, he sees a man who will turn out to be Oswald. Truly confirms Oswald works there, and they move on. Oswald leaves the building.

12.34pm The presidential limousine, having miraculously not crashed en route, turns up at Parkland Hospital's emergency entrance to find nobody there. Orderlies and stretchers are quickly found, and the president, lifeless,

"BULLETIN". Walter Cronkite, the most famous voice in American media, speaks: "Here is a bulletin from CBS News. In Dallas, Texas, three shots were fired at President Kennedy's motorcade, in downtown Dallas. The first reports say President Kennedy has been seriously wounded by this shooting." Similar announcements appear on ABC and NBC. All three networks will soon suspend programming for several days to cover the assassination.

Dr Charles Carrico assesses the president's desperate condition. He puts his ear to Kennedy's chest and detects a faint heartbeat. Everyone knows it is futile, but he and his colleagues — Dr Malcolm Perry soon takes charge, and a cast of dozens are involved — go through the motions of trying to save him. Jackie Kennedy, still covered in blood, insists on being in the room.

12.43pm Bobby Kennedy, the president's brother and the US Attorney General, is at his home in Hickory Hill, outside Washington DC, when he receives a call from J Edgar Hoover, head of the FBI. It is without compassion. "The president's been shot. It's believed to be fatal."

12.45pm Witnesses begin to approach the police, talking about the man they saw in the Depository building. A

description — "unknown white male, approximately 30, slender build, height five feet ten inches (roughly 1.8 metres), weight 165 pounds (75 kilograms), reported to be armed with what is thought to be a .30 calibre rifle" — is read out by the police dispatcher. Meanwhile Oswald, his bus becalmed in traffic, has disembarked and catches a cab to North Beckley, in the Dallas suburb of Oak Cliff.

12.53pm NBC cancels all regular programmes, an arrangement that will remain in place until Tuesday, November 26. Other networks do the same.

12.58pm Police Captain Will Fritz and his team arrive at the Depository Building. Fritz will be instrumental to the investigation. Meanwhile Father Frank Huber drives into Parkland to administer the last rites to Kennedy, a Catholic.

At this time, Oswald arrives at the tiny room he rents in Oak Cliff — he is estranged from his wife and children, and sees them only on some weekends. He gets a revolver and his jacket, before leaving again.

★ **1pm** Dr Malcolm Perry tries to give the president CPR but the line on the heart monitor is flat green. A white sheet is pulled over Kennedy's face.

The president is dead. Huber delivers last rites.

1.05pm Bobby Kennedy is notified. Through his grief, in the following hour he will instruct the national security advisor, McGeorge Bundy, to change the locks on his brother's personal files, and dismantle the secret taping system he had installed in the Oval Office.

1.06pm Fritz and his team begin searching the sixth floor of the Depository Building. In a corner they find a sniper's nest: a stack of boxes that would hide a person from view. There are three spent cartridge casings on the floor.

1.07pm News of the president's shooting has reached the New York Stock Exchange. The market is plunging.

▶ **1.08pm** Officer JD Tippit is driving around Oak Cliff when

he sees a man who roughly fits the description that the police dispatcher put out earlier. It is Oswald. Tippit begins tailing him.

1.10pm Johnson is told of Kennedy's death. A moment later Malcolm Kilduff, a White House spokesman, addresses Johnson as "Mr President" for the first time. They begin making arrangements to get back to the plane, but Johnson won't leave Texas without Jackie Kennedy. And she won't leave without her husband's body.

1.12pm Tippit pulls up next to Oswald and walks around the front of his car to talk to him. Suddenly Oswald pulls a gun and shoots him four times. Tippit falls to the ground and Oswald shoots once more, right into Tippit's head. There are numerous witnesses as Oswald walks away.



1.16pm Walter Cronkite tells the nation the president has died.

1.20pm A hospital staff member sees a bullet on one of the stretchers Kennedy and Connally were brought in on. This will become a key piece of evidence.

1.22pm Police find a rifle wedged between boxes on the sixth floor of the Depository store. It still has a round in the chamber.

1.26pm Johnson and his team head back to Love Field.

1.30pm Undertaker Vernon O'Neal arrives at Parkland with the most expensive casket he has to offer.

At the Texas School Depository, building supervisor

1.20PM

1.48PM

2.38PM

4.58PM

Truly has gone through his roster and realised that one staff member is missing: Oswald. He tells Fritz.

1.33pm Kilduff begins a press conference in a classroom in the hospital's medical school. He says, "President John F Kennedy died at approximately one o'clock Central Standard Time here in Dallas."

1.36pm Oswald enters the Texas Theatre. By now he has been noticed by several bystanders.

Word is spreading across America. People simply stop in the streets. Church bells toll, and the churches themselves fill up. Football games are cancelled, racetracks close, television pretty much ends. Word also spreads worldwide. West Berlin mayor Willy Brandt remarks, "A flame went out for all those who had hoped for a just peace and a better world."

1.39pm Johnson is on board Air Force One but does not want to leave without Jackie Kennedy. Johnson calls Bobby Kennedy to discuss whether and how he (Johnson) should be sworn in as president, something Kennedy finds insensitive and unnecessary. However, putting his feelings aside, he does not object. Johnson reaches a local judge, Sarah Hughes, who agrees to officiate.

1.48pm Police arrive at the Texas Theatre. They go row by row and then confront Oswald. Oswald punches one of the officers and draws a gun, but is overpowered and arrested.

1.53pm The police bundle Oswald into a car and check his wallet. It contains ID not just in the name Oswald, but another: A J Hidell. Oswald is unemotional.

1.58pm Oswald arrives at City Hall, where the police headquarters are located.

2.04pm A near-brawl is developing over custody of the president's body. Since it is a homicide, normal policy at the hospital is for an autopsy to be held in the state of Texas where the crime took place, but Kennedy's Secret Service men want to take the body back

to Washington, in large part out of consideration for Jackie Kennedy. Through brute force more than anything, the Secret Service win, and Kennedy's body is wheeled out of the hospital.

2.14pm Jackie Kennedy, the casket and the president's staff arrive back at Love Field again. The back rows of seats have been taken out of the plane to accommodate the coffin. The men struggle to get the casket up the back ramp to the plane.

2.15pm The FBI realise, with some consternation, that they have had a file on Oswald and his wife for some time. It was known that Oswald, a former US Marine, had tried to defect to the Soviet Union, and had visited the Soviet embassy in Mexico City. He is also a long-standing member of a movement advocating greater respect towards Cuba's government.

2.25pm Fritz begins to interrogate Oswald. Fritz is considered one of the best in his profession at this job, but has a calm and peaceful demeanour, drawing information out of suspects after developing an aura of trust with them. He will spend much of the next two days questioning Oswald, who is calm and apparently completely unworried. Oswald never comes close to confessing.

2.38pm Johnson puts his hand on a Catholic prayer book. His wife, Claudia "Lady Bird" Johnson, is on his right, and Jackie Kennedy, her Chanel suit still covered in her husband's blood, on his left. Hughes swears him in: Lyndon Johnson is the President of the United States of America. Now the plane gets airborne and heads back for Washington.

3.15pm Johnson makes his first phone call as president: to Rose Kennedy, John's mother.

4.58pm Air Force One lands at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland, outside Washington. The first person on board is Bobby Kennedy, storming up the steps and ignoring Johnson's outstretched hand in his haste to reach Jackie. The president's men move his casket from the

plane. Johnson is taken by helicopter to the White House; the first thing he does is write notes to Kennedy's two young children, Caroline and John. Neither has yet been told.

5.55pm A naval ambulance takes Kennedy's body through silent, people-lined streets to the hospital at Bethesda where his autopsy will be held.

The autopsy will be conducted by Dr James Humes and Dr J Thornton Boswell, and will conclude that Kennedy was hit by two bullets. The first, which will come to be known as the Magic Bullet, hit Kennedy in the upper back, exited through his throat, and then hit Connally; the second, fatal shot hit the right side of his head.

7.55pm Detectives take Oswald from jail to Fritz's office; the hallways are now full of reporters. Oswald tells them, "I'm just a patsy!"

10.15pm While all of this has been happening, nightclub proprietor Jack Ruby, who runs Dallas' Carousel nightclub, has been working himself into a frenzy of grief about the president's death. He closes his club for days, something he can ill afford to do. He spends much of the day in tears and, around this time, gatecrashes his way into the police department, where he is well known.

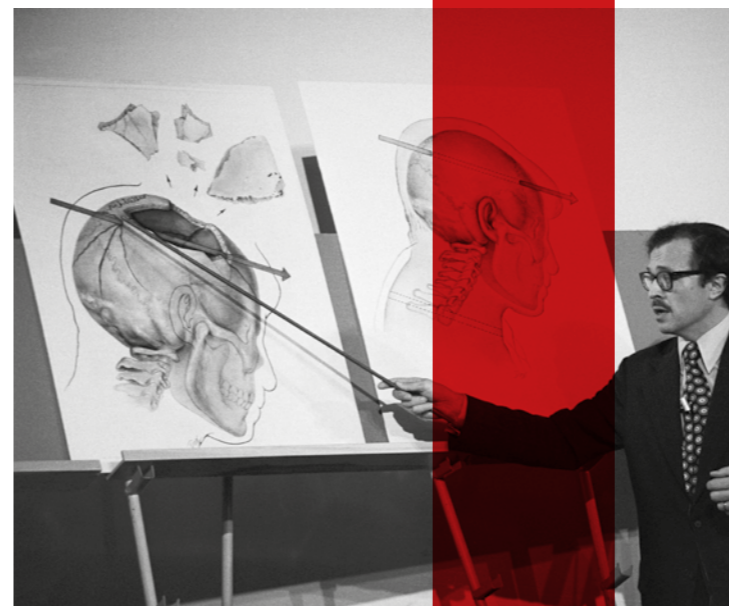
11.20pm The police believe they have sufficient evidence to charge Oswald with the murders of Tippett and Kennedy. The charge is written up and filed at 11.26pm. It is an extraordinary job the Dallas police have done today: 11.5 hours to catch the man they believe responsible for murdering a nation's leader, and gather sufficient evidence against him to prosecute.

1am NBC prepares to shut down for the night. Announcer David Brinkley sums it up. "It is one of the ugliest days in American history. In about four hours we have gone from President Kennedy in Dallas, alive, to back in Washington, dead, and a new president in his place. There is really no more to say except that what happened has been just too much, too ugly and too fast."



ABOVE: KENNEDY'S REMAINS ARE UNLOADED FROM AIR FORCE ONE AT ANDREWS AIR FORCE BASE IN WASHINGTON DC
 RIGHT: DR MICHAEL BADEN, CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER OF NEW YORK CITY, USES A DRAWING WHEN GIVING TESTIMONY, TO DEMONSTRATE THE PATH OF THE BULLET THROUGH KENNEDY'S HEAD
 FAR RIGHT: JUDGE SARAH HUGHES SWEARS LYNDON JOHNSON IN AS PRESIDENT ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE AT LOVE FIELD, DALLAS. AMONG OTHERS, JACKIE KENNEDY, WHO IS ON JOHNSON'S LEFT, AND HIS WIFE, CLAUDIA "LADY BIRD" JOHNSON, ON HIS RIGHT, STAND AS WITNESSES

PHOTO: CORBIS (DR MICHAEL BADEN)



THE MAGIC BULLET THEORY



FOR THE MAGIC BULLET THEORY TO BE CORRECT, ONE BULLET MUST HAVE GONE THROUGH KENNEDY'S NECK, AND CONNALLY'S CHEST, WRIST AND THIGH. THAT ENTAILS PENETRATING 15 LAYERS OF CLOTHING, SEVEN LAYERS OF SKIN, AND 15 INCHES (38 CENTIMETRES) OF TISSUE AND BONE, REMOVING FOUR INCHES (OVER 10 CENTIMETRES) OF RIB ALONG THE WAY. CONNALLY, AMONG OTHERS, NEVER ACCEPTED THIS COULD ALL HAVE BEEN DONE BY ONE BULLET. THIS IS THE BULLET THAT WAS FOUND ON A STRETCHER AT PARKLAND, AND FROM THE SIDE, IT LOOKS COMPLETELY INTACT, ALTHOUGH ITS TAIL WAS COMPRESSED ON ONE SIDE. THE CONDITION OF THE BULLET PARTICULARLY ALARMS THEORISTS: ACCORDING TO THE WARREN COMMISSION, IT HAD NO THREAD STRIATIONS, AND WAS MARKED WITH NO BLOOD, HUMAN TISSUE OR CLOTHING. HOWEVER, THEORISTS TEND TO SHOW THE SIDE-ON PICTURE (WHICH LOOKS PRISTINE) RATHER THAN THE ONE AT THE BASE (WHICH SHOWS DEFORMATION), AND THE METALLURGICAL COMPOSITION OF THE BULLET WAS THE SAME AS FRAGMENTS FOUND IN CONNALLY'S WRIST



It is 1.35am by the time Judge David Johnston reads the Kennedy murder charge, complaint number F-154, to Oswald. Most of the other characters in our story then get some much-needed sleep,

but Ruby, who tends to keep a nocturnal existence anyway, is up all night, visiting a radio station amongst other places. Just before 3am, the Kennedys at Bethesda are told the autopsy is complete and they can take the president's body home. Not until Jackie goes to bed in the small hours does she take off her bloodstained clothes. Fritz heads home at 3.45am. Detective work continues all night, however. At 4am, Klein's Sporting Goods in Chicago finds in its records the order form for the rifle with the serial number C2766, the one found in the Depository, a Mannlicher-Carcano. The name is "A Hidell" and the address is PO Box 2915 in Dallas. Hidell, the FBI

agents in attendance know, is the name on the second ID card in Oswald's wallet when he was arrested. Later in the day, the US Postal Records Center in Alexandria, Virginia, will locate the original money order used to purchase the weapon. The handwriting on it is Oswald's. Back at the White House, Johnson wins few friends by turning up at the door of Evelyn Lincoln, Kennedy's long-serving secretary, and asking if he can move his staff in — basically giving her half an hour to clear out. Bobby Kennedy confronts him, and eventually Johnson doesn't move in to the Oval Office until Kennedy is buried. Jackie and the children remain in the White House until December 7.

Also today, Zapruder sells his film to *Life* magazine for US\$50,000 for print rights only (he will later change this to all rights for US\$150,000 in six instalments, the first of which he donated to the widow and family of police officer Tippit). Around the globe, nations are waking up in mourning. Even the Soviet Union is sympathetic, with Khrushchev turning up at the American embassy in Moscow to pay his respects. China is the one brazenly gloating exception. The questioning of Oswald continues, but he yields little. He sees his wife and brother during the day but, assuming his conversations are recorded, doesn't say much.

PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES (FUNERAL); CORBIS (LEE HARVEY OSWALD)

ABOVE LEFT: THE HORSE-DRAWN CAISSON BEARING KENNEDY'S FLAG-DRAPED CASKET LEADS THE FUNERAL CORTÈGE IN WASHINGTON DC. ABOVE: THE ACCUSED ASSASSIN OSWALD (THIRD FROM LEFT) BEING ESCORTED BY POLICE OFFICERS AND DETECTIVES

At 2.30am, the Dallas police receives a call warning that Oswald will be killed "tonight, tomorrow morning, or tomorrow night". The caller hangs up. The police have already told the press that they will transfer Oswald to the county jail around 10am that day, and despite the warning, they go ahead and do so, wishing to keep the media outside. This task involves taking Oswald down in a lift to the parking garage downstairs in City Hall, where a crowd is already building. The basement area is supposed to be cleared of anyone but authorised personnel — which in practice means hundreds of reporters and cameramen.

That morning, Ruby — who remains distraught, to the surprise of those who know him — gets up and reads in the *Times Herald* a letter to "My Dear Caroline", addressed to Kennedy's daughter, and expressing the sadness of a Dallas resident to a child who has lost her father. Ruby is deeply affected by it, and reads in the same paper that Jackie Kennedy may have to be a witness at Oswald's trial. According to the official version of events, the combination of these two facts — and the news that Oswald has not confessed — enrage Ruby sufficiently to believe that someone must kill Oswald, to avoid further distress to Jackie and her children. That morning he goes to Western Union to wire some money to an employee at his club, and then heads to City Hall. Meanwhile in Washington, the completed autopsy is delivered, concluding that Kennedy was hit by two bullets, fired from behind and above the

president, with the fatal missile hitting the skull. Awaiting his transfer, Fritz again questions Oswald, and is now able to confront him with details about the rifle, and also his membership of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. He is happy enough to admit that, and to talk a little about ideology. But he evades everything else.

11.18am Fritz and Curry confer and conclude they are ready to transfer Oswald. Curry heads down to the basement. Secret Service agent Forrest Sorrels approaches Fritz and says, "If I were you, I would not move Oswald to the county jail at an announced time like this. I would take him out at three or four in the morning when there's no one around." Fritz agrees, yet it's not up to him.

11.19am Oswald, his hands manacled in front, is attached by a pair of handcuffs to homicide detective Jim Leavelle. "Lee, if anybody shoots at you, I hope they're as good a shot as you are," he says. Several floors below, a convoy of an armoured truck and accompanying cars is assembled at the top of the ramp leading into City Hall. Officers are trying to move reporters so they are not in the way, with little success.

Oswald, with Leavelle, Fritz and other police officers, is taken to the lift.

11.20am The lift descends. Ruby reaches the top of the ramp, and keeps on walking. Halfway down he hears somebody — presumably patrolman Roy Vaughn — shout "Hey, you!" at him, but keeps walking into the scrum of reporters.

The cordon of detectives around Oswald leaves the lift and are instantly swamped by reporters, photographers, and the heavy cameras of NBC and CBS (ABC is waiting at the county jail instead). Correspondents of the networks shout into their microphones for airtime, and in NBC's case are instantly granted it; not CBS, which is waiting for a previous piece to finish.

The detectives are temporarily blinded by flash bulbs and then see that

the car waiting for them is still reversing into position. Reporters try to put questions to Oswald. And in the midst of this melee, Ruby elbows his way through the crowd with a gun.

11.21am Ruby gets one shot off. It hits Oswald in the stomach. The picture of the moment, with Oswald's face contorted in pain and a stunned Leavelle looking aghast in his white hat, will win Robert Jackson, then of the *Dallas Times-Herald*, a Pulitzer prize. Tom Pettit on NBC, broadcasting live to America, says, "He's been shot. He's been shot. Oswald's been shot."

Leavelle and another officer, LC Graves, jump on Ruby to get the gun off him. Ruby says, "I hope I killed the son of a bitch." There is chaos in the packed garage. Pettit shouts to the nation: "There's absolute panic, absolute panic here in the basement of the Dallas Police Headquarters... pandemonium has broken loose here!" He does better than Bob Huffaker, reporting live for CBS, who gets as far as "and no one is..." before he is flattened by a frenzy of reporters.

Oswald is quickly dragged back into the jail office and the handcuffs removed.

11.22am Frederick Bieberdorf, a medical student, is the on-duty first aid attendant for the city jail. He detects no pulse, heartbeat or breathing; he can feel the bullet between the ribs on Oswald's right side, meaning it has gone all the way through his torso. Oswald is put in an ambulance and taken to Parkland, just like Kennedy two days earlier; he is treated in Trauma Room Two, across the hall from where Kennedy had been. Dr Malcolm Perry — who had worked to save Kennedy — is in charge of efforts to save him, which at one stage appear to have a possibility of success. But eventually his heart fails. He is pronounced dead at 1.07pm.

While all this is happening, Jackie Kennedy and her children are watching the president's casket being taken from the North Portico of the White House and placed in an artillery caisson, where six white horses pull it up Pennsylvania Avenue to the Capitol. Several hundred

thousand people line the route, in almost total silence. As a 21-gun salute fades to a navy band playing 'Hail to the Chief', Jackie Kennedy sobs openly. When she and little Caroline kiss the closed casket — his wounds have been too dreadful for an open one to be considered — cameras cut away to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, all standing at attention, and all crying.

Also simultaneously, Ruby is interviewed by stunned policemen, Secret Service and FBI staff. His story is clear and repeated: somebody had to kill Oswald, just in case he got off, and Ruby was the man to do it.

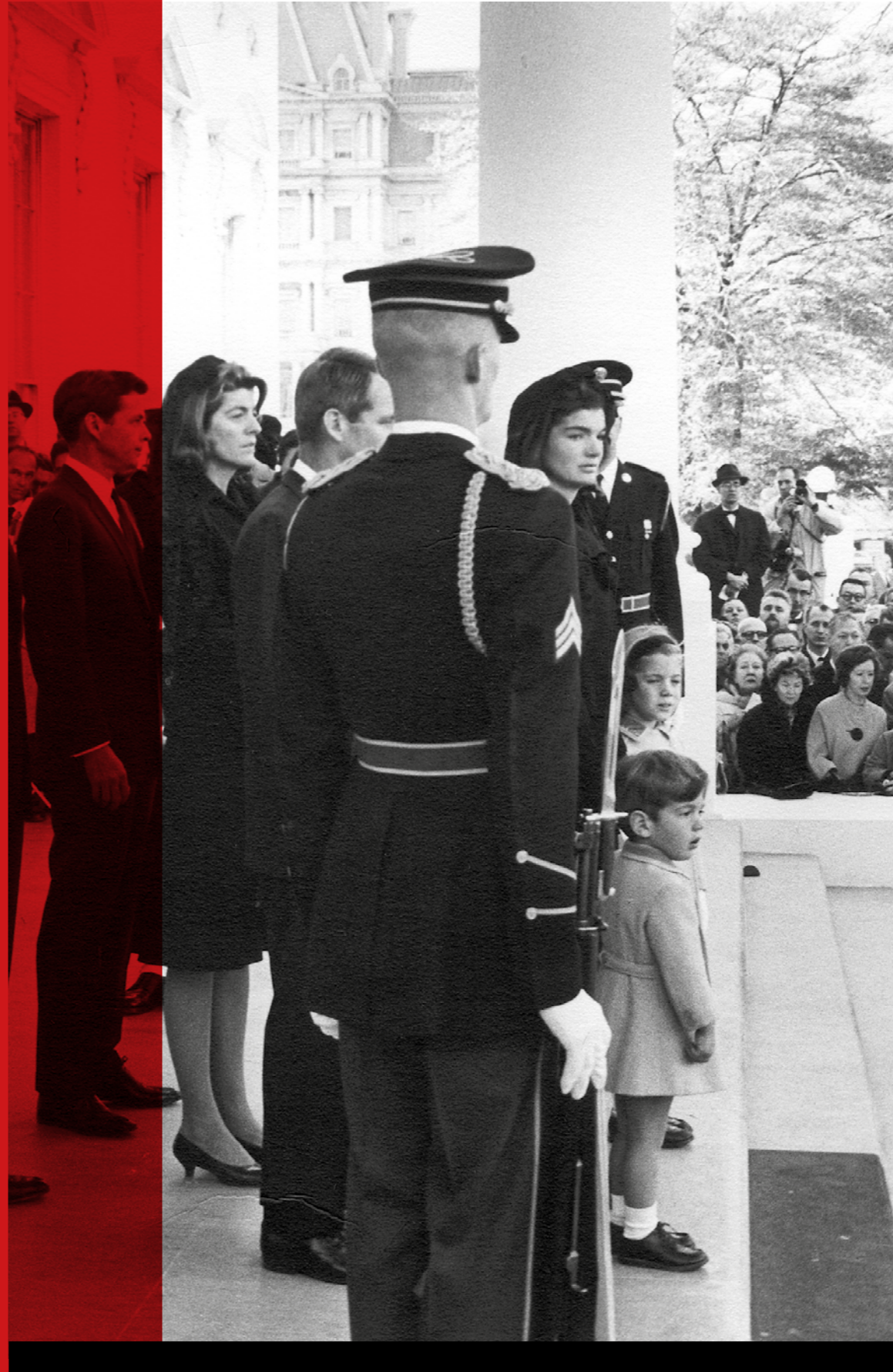
It won't take long until conspiracy theories start; they are aired on television that very evening. Americans will never now see Oswald put on trial, and any chance of Oswald incriminating anyone else who might have been involved is now gone. There are suggestions that the Dallas police let Oswald be killed. Later, it will be alleged, frequently, that Ruby was representing Mob interests to stop Oswald from talking.

THE AFTERMATH

Monday, November 25 brings Kennedy's funeral, which — apart from the grief involved — is also a grave concern to a jumpy Secret Service. "It's a bodyguard's nightmare," says Vincent Bugliosi. "Walking bareheaded, in plain view of any potential sniper, are 22 presidents, 10 prime ministers, and much of the world's remaining royalty. There are more than 200 officials from a hundred countries, the United Nations, and the Roman Catholic Church. An estimated one million people line the funeral procession route." Nevertheless Johnson refuses to use a



TOP: JACK RUBY LUNGING FORWARD WITH A GUN AIMED AT OSWALD. HE ONLY MANAGED TO GET OFF ONE SHOT BEFORE THE POLICE SUBDUED HIM — BUT THAT WAS ENOUGH TO KILL OSWALD
ABOVE: THIS IS THE LAST PICTURE TO BE CAPTURED OF RUBY. IT WAS TAKEN NOVEMBER 25, 1963 AS HE WAS BOOKED INTO DALLAS COUNTY JAIL, CHARGED WITH OSWALD'S MURDER
RIGHT: JACKIE KENNEDY WITH HER TWO YOUNG CHILDREN, CAROLINE AND JOHN KENNEDY JUNIOR, AT HER HUSBAND'S FUNERAL



bulletproof car. He and his wife walk behind the Kennedys. As it turns out, the 93 percent of American television sets that tune in — 175 million people — see not another shooting, but heartbreaking images of tiny John Kennedy Junior saluting his father's casket.

RUBY'S STORY IS CLEAR AND REPEATED: SOMEBODY HAD TO KILL OSWALD, JUST IN CASE HE GOT OFF, AND RUBY WAS THE MAN TO DO IT

At 2pm, police officer Tippit is buried in Dallas. And at 4pm, Oswald is buried in Rose Hill Cemetery. There are no pallbearers for Oswald, and his coffin — a cheap wooden box draped in cloth — ends up being carried to the grave by six reporters covering the funeral.

A few days later, President Johnson addresses Congress. At the end of his remarks he says, "No memorial or oration or eulogy could more eloquently honour President Kennedy's memory than the earliest possible passage of the civil rights bill for which he fought for so long." It passes shortly afterwards: perhaps the greatest single legacy of Kennedy's tenure as US President.

The first and probably most well-known investigation into the assassination was the Warren Commission, which concluded Oswald acted alone, but many inquiries have been held, with varying conclusions. Over the years, suspicion of the official version of events has grown; polls have found as many as 80 percent of Americans believe there was a cover-up of some degree. It's often said something else died with Kennedy — public trust of politicians. ●

Discovery Channel airs two JFK specials this month (see page 106).