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Footsteps on the Road to Learning



*Biography
John F Kennedy*



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Donnette E Davis

John Fitzgerald "Jack" Kennedy (May 29, 1917 – November 22, 1963), often referred to by his initials **JFK**, was the 35th President of the United States, serving from 1961 until his assassination in 1963.

After Kennedy's military service as commander of the Motor Torpedo Boat PT-109 during World War II in the South Pacific, his aspirations turned political. With the encouragement and grooming of his father, Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr., Kennedy represented Massachusetts's 11th congressional district in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1947 to 1953 as a Democrat, and in the U.S. Senate from 1953 until 1960. Kennedy defeated then Vice President and Republican candidate Richard Nixon in the 1960 U.S. presidential election, one of the closest in American history. To date, he's the only Catholic president. He was the second-youngest President (after Theodore Roosevelt), and the youngest elected to the office, at the age of 43. Kennedy's also the only president to have won a Pulitzer Prize. Events during his administration include the Bay of Pigs Invasion, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the building of the Berlin Wall, the Space Race, the African American Civil Rights Movement and early events of the Vietnam War. Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963, in Dallas, Texas. Lee Harvey Oswald was charged with the crime but was murdered two days later by Jack Ruby before he could be put on trial. The Warren Commission and the 1979 House Select Committee on Assassinations concluded that Oswald was the assassin, with the HSCA allowing for the probability of conspiracy. The event proved to be an important moment in U.S. history because of its impact on the nation and the ensuing political repercussions. Today, Kennedy continues to rank highly in public opinion ratings of former U.S. presidents.

Early life and education

Kennedy was born at 83 Beals Street in Brookline, Massachusetts on Tuesday, May 29, 1917, at 3:00 p.m., the second son of Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr, and Rose Fitzgerald; Rose, in turn, was the eldest child of John "Honey Fitz" Fitzgerald, a prominent Boston political figure who was the city's mayor and a three-term member of Congress. Kennedy lived in Brookline for his first ten years of life. He attended Brookline's public Edward Devotion School from kindergarten through the beginning of 3rd grade, then Noble and Greenough Lower School and its successor, the Dexter School, a private school for boys, through 4th grade. In September 1927, Kennedy moved with his family to a rented 20-room mansion in Riverdale, Bronx, New York City, then two years later moved five miles (8 km) northeast to a 21-room mansion on a six-acre estate in Bronxville, New York, purchased in May 1929. He was a member of Scout Troop 2 at Bronxville from 1929 to 1931 and was to be the first Scout to become President. Kennedy spent summers with his family at their home in Hyannisport, Massachusetts, also purchased in 1929, and Christmas and Easter holidays with his family at their winter home in Palm Beach, Florida, purchased in 1933. In his primary school years, he attended Riverdale Country School, a private school for boys in Riverdale, for 5th through 7th grade.

For 8th grade in September 1930, the 13-year old Kennedy was sent fifty miles away to Canterbury School, a lay Roman Catholic boarding school for boys in New Milford, Connecticut. In late April 1931, he'd appendicitis requiring an appendectomy, after which he withdrew from Canterbury and recuperated at home. In September 1931, Kennedy was sent to the Choate School, a private university preparatory boarding school for boys in Wallingford, Connecticut for 9th through 12th grades, following his

elder brother, Joe Jr., who was two years ahead of him. In January 1934 during his junior year at Choate, Jack Kennedy became ill, lost a lot of weight, was hospitalized at Yale-New Haven Hospital until Easter, and spent most of June 1934 hospitalized at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota for evaluation of colitis.

He graduated from Choate in June 1935. Kennedy's superlative in his yearbook was "Most likely to become President". In September 1935, he sailed on the SS *Normandie* on his first trip abroad with his parents and his sister Kathleen to London with the intent of studying for a year with Professor Harold Laski at the London School of Economics (LSE) as his elder brother Joe had done. After less than a week at LSE and a brief hospitalization with jaundice, Kennedy sailed back to America only three weeks later. In October 1935, Kennedy enrolled late and spent six weeks at Princeton University. He was then hospitalized for two months' observation for possible leukaemia at Peter Bent Brigham Hospital in Boston in January and February 1936. He recuperated at the Kennedy winter home in Palm Beach in March and April, spent May and June working as a ranch hand on a 40,000-acre (160 km²) cattle ranch outside Benson, Arizona, and in July and August raced sailboats at the Kennedy summer home in Hyannisport.

In September 1936 he enrolled as a freshman at Harvard College, where he produced that year's annual Freshman Smoker, called by a reviewer "an elaborate entertainment, which included in its cast outstanding personalities of the radio, screen and sports world." He resided in Winthrop House during his sophomore through senior years, again following two years behind his elder brother, Joe. In early July 1937, Kennedy took his convertible, sailed on the SS *Washington* to France, and spent ten weeks driving with a friend through France, Italy, Germany, Holland and England. In late June 1938, Kennedy sailed with his father and his brother Joe on the SS *Normandie* to spend July working with his father, recently appointed U.S. Ambassador to the Court of St. James by President Roosevelt, at the American embassy in London, and August with his family at a villa near Cannes. From February through September 1939, Kennedy toured Europe, the Soviet Union, the Balkans and the Middle East to gather background information for his Harvard senior honours thesis. He spent the last ten days of August in Czechoslovakia and Germany before returning to London on September 1, 1939, the day Germany invaded Poland. On September 3, 1939, Kennedy and his family were in attendance at the Strangers Gallery of the House of Commons to hear speeches in support of the United Kingdom's declaration of war on Germany. Kennedy was sent as his father's representative to help with arrangements for American survivors of the SS *Athenia*, before flying back to the U.S. on Pan Am's *Dixie Clipper* from Foynes, Ireland to Port Washington, New York on his first transatlantic flight at the end of September.

In 1940, Kennedy completed his thesis, "Appeasement in Munich," about British participation in the Munich Agreement. He initially intended his thesis to be private, but his father encouraged him to publish it as a book. He graduated *cum laude* from Harvard with a degree in international affairs in June 1940, and his thesis was published in July 1940 as a book entitled *Why England Slept*, and became a bestseller. From September to December 1940, Kennedy was enrolled and audited classes at the Stanford Graduate School of Business. In early 1941, he helped his father complete the writing of a memoir of his three years as an American ambassador. In May and June 1941, Kennedy traveled throughout South America.

Military service

In the spring of 1941, Kennedy volunteered for the U.S. Army, but was rejected, mainly because of his troublesome back. Nevertheless, in September of that year, the U.S. Navy accepted him, because of the influence of the director of the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI), a former naval attaché to Joseph Kennedy. As an ensign, Kennedy served in the office which supplied bulletins and briefing information for the Secretary of the Navy. It was during this assignment that the attack on Pearl Harbour occurred. He attended the Naval Reserve Officers Training School and Motor Torpedo Boat Squadron Training Centre before being assigned for duty in Panama and eventually the Pacific theatre. He participated in various commands in the Pacific theatre and earned the rank of lieutenant, commanding a patrol torpedo (PT) boat. On August 2, 1943, Kennedy's boat, the *PT-109*, was taking part in a night-time patrol near New Georgia in the Solomon Islands. It was rammed by the Japanese destroyer *Amagiri*. Kennedy was thrown across the deck, injuring his already-troubled back. Nonetheless, Kennedy swam, towing a badly-burned man by using a life jacket strap he clenched in his mouth. He towed the wounded man to an island and later to a second island from where his crew was subsequently rescued. For these actions, Kennedy received the Navy and Marine Corps Medal under the following citation:

For extremely heroic conduct as Commanding Officer of Motor Torpedo Boat 109 following the collision and sinking of that vessel in the Pacific War Theatre on August 1-2, 1943. Unmindful of personal danger, Lieutenant (then Lieutenant, Junior Grade) Kennedy unhesitatingly braved the difficulties and hazards of darkness to direct rescue operations, swimming many hours to secure aid and food after he'd succeeded in getting his crew ashore. His outstanding courage, endurance and leadership contributed to the saving of several lives and were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.

Kennedy's other decorations in World War II included the Purple Heart, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal and the World War II Victory Medal. He was honorably discharged in early 1945, just a few months before Japan surrendered. The incident was popularized when he became president and would be the subject of several magazine articles, books, comic books, TV specials and a feature length movie, making the *PT-109* one of the most famous U.S. Navy ships of the war. Scale models and even G.I. Joe figures based on the incident were still being produced in the 2000s. The coconut which was used to scrawl a rescue message given to Solomon Islander scouts who found him was kept on his presidential desk and is still at the John F. Kennedy Library.

During his presidency, Kennedy privately admitted to friends that he didn't feel that he deserved the medals he'd received, because the *PT-109* incident had been the result of a botched military operation that'd cost the lives of two members of his crew. When later asked by a reporter how he became a war hero, Kennedy (known for a sense of humour) joked: "It was involuntary. They sank my boat." In May 2002, a National Geographic expedition found what's believed to be the wreckage of the *PT-109* in the Solomon Islands.

Early political career

After World War II, Kennedy had considered the option of becoming a journalist before deciding to run for political office. Prior to the war, he hadn't strongly considered becoming a politician as a career, because his family, especially his father, had already pinned its political hopes on his elder brother. Joseph, however, was killed in

World War II, giving John seniority. When in 1946 U.S. Representative James Michael Curley vacated his seat in an overwhelmingly Democratic district to become mayor of Boston, Kennedy ran for the seat, beating his Republican opponent by a large margin. He was a congressman for six years but had a mixed voting record, often diverging from President Harry S. Truman and the rest of the Democratic Party. In 1952, he defeated incumbent Republican Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. for the U.S. Senate.

Kennedy married Jacqueline Lee Bouvier on September 12, 1953. Charles L. Bartlett, a journalist, introduced the pair at a dinner party. Kennedy underwent several spinal operations over the following two years, nearly dying (in all he received the Roman Catholic Church's last rites four times during his life) and was often absent from the Senate. During his convalescence in 1956, he published *Profiles in Courage*, a book describing eight instances in which U.S. Senators risked their careers by standing by their personal beliefs. The book was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Biography in 1957.

In the 1956 presidential election, presidential nominee Adlai Stevenson left the choice of a Vice Presidential nominee to the Democratic convention, and Kennedy finished second in that balloting to Senator Estes Kefauver of Tennessee. Despite this defeat, Kennedy received national exposure from that episode that'd prove valuable in subsequent years. His father, Joseph Kennedy, Sr., pointed out that it was just as well that John didn't get that nomination, as some people sought to blame anything they could on Roman Catholics, even though it was privately known that any Democrat would've trouble running against Eisenhower in 1956.

John F. Kennedy voted for final passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1957 after having earlier voted for the "Jury Trial Amendment", which effectively rendered the Act toothless because convictions for violations couldn't be obtained. Staunch segregationists such as senators James Eastland and John McClellan and Mississippi Governor James P. Coleman were early supporters of Kennedy's presidential campaign. In 1958, Kennedy was re-elected to a second term in the United States Senate, defeating his Republican opponent, Boston lawyer Vincent J. Celeste, by a wide margin.

Years later, it was revealed that in September 1947 when he was 30 years old and during his first term as a congressman, Kennedy had been diagnosed by Sir Daniel Davis at The London Clinic with Addison's disease, a rare endocrine disorder. The nature of this and other medical problems were kept secret from the press and public throughout Kennedy's lifetime and Presidential tenure.

Senator Joseph McCarthy was a friend of the Kennedy family: Joseph Kennedy, Sr. was a leading McCarthy supporter; Robert F. Kennedy worked for McCarthy's subcommittee, and McCarthy dated Patricia Kennedy. In 1954, when the Senate was poised to condemn McCarthy, John Kennedy drafted a speech calling for McCarthy's censure, but never delivered it. When on December 2, 1954, the Senate rendered its highly publicized decision to censure McCarthy, Senator Kennedy was in the hospital. Though absent, Kennedy could've "paired" his vote against that of another senator, but chose not to; neither did he ever indicate then nor later how he'd've voted. The episode damaged Kennedy's support in the liberal community, especially with Eleanor Roosevelt, as late as the 1956 and 1960 elections.

1960 presidential election

On January 2, 1960, Kennedy officially declared his intent to run for President of the United States. In the Democratic primary election, he faced challenges from Senator Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota and Senator Wayne Morse of Oregon. Kennedy defeated Humphrey in Wisconsin and West Virginia and Morse in Maryland and Oregon, although Morse's candidacy's often forgotten by historians. He also defeated token opposition (often write-in candidates) in New Hampshire, Indiana and Nebraska. In West Virginia, Kennedy visited a coal mine and talked to mine workers to win their support; most people in that conservative, mostly Protestant state were deeply suspicious of Kennedy's Roman Catholicism. His victory in West Virginia cemented his credentials as a candidate with broad popular appeal. At the Democratic Convention, he gave the well-known "New Frontier" speech, which represented the changes America and the rest of the world would be going through. With Humphrey and Morse out of the race, Kennedy's main opponent at the convention in Los Angeles was Senator Lyndon B. Johnson of Texas. Adlai Stevenson, the Democratic nominee in 1952 and 1956, wasn't officially running but had broad grassroots support inside and outside the convention hall. Senator Stuart Symington of Missouri was also a candidate, as were several favorite sons. On July 13, 1960, the Democratic convention nominated Kennedy as its candidate for President. Kennedy asked Johnson to be his Vice Presidential candidate, despite opposition from many liberal delegates and Kennedy's own staff, including Robert Kennedy. He needed Johnson's strength in the South to win what was considered likely to be the closest election since 1916. Major issues included how to get the economy moving again, Kennedy's Roman Catholicism, Cuba, and whether the Soviet space and missile programs had surpassed those of the U.S. To address fears that his Roman Catholicism would impact his decision-making, he famously told the Greater Houston Ministerial Association on September 12, 1960, "I'm not the Catholic candidate for President. I'm the Democratic Party's candidate for President who also happens to be a Catholic. I don't speak for my Church on public matters — and the Church doesn't speak for me." Kennedy also brought up the point of whether one-quarter of Americans were relegated to second-class citizenship just because they were Roman Catholic.

In September and October, Kennedy debated Republican candidate and Vice President Richard Nixon in the first televised U.S. presidential debates in U.S. history. During these programs, Nixon, nursing an injured leg and sporting "five o'clock shadow", looked tense and uncomfortable, while Kennedy appeared relaxed, leading the huge television audience to deem Kennedy the winner. Radio listeners, however, either thought Nixon had won or that the debates were a draw. Nixon didn't wear make-up during the initial debate, unlike Kennedy. The debates are now considered a milestone in American political history—the point at which the medium of television began to play a dominant role in national politics. After the first debate Kennedy's campaign gained momentum and he pulled slightly ahead of Nixon in most polls. On Tuesday, November 8, Kennedy defeated Nixon in one of the closest presidential elections of the twentieth century. In the national popular vote Kennedy led Nixon by just two-tenths of one percent (49.7% to 49.5%), while in the Electoral College he won 303 votes to Nixon's 219 (269 were needed to win). Another 14 electors from Mississippi and Alabama refused to support Kennedy because of his support for the civil rights movement; they voted for Senator Harry F. Byrd, Sr. of Virginia.

Presidency

John F. Kennedy was sworn in as the 35th President at noon on January 20, 1961. In his inaugural address he spoke of the need for all Americans to be active citizens, famously saying, "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country." He also asked the nations of the world to join together to fight what he called the "common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease, and war itself." In closing, he expanded on his desire for greater internationalism:

"Finally, whether you're citizens of America or citizens of the world, ask of us the same high standards of strength and sacrifice which we ask of you."

Foreign policy

President Kennedy's foreign policy was dominated by American-Soviet relations. Much foreign policy revolved around proxy interventions in the context of the early stage Cold War.

Cuba and the Bay of Pigs Invasion

Prior to Kennedy's election to the presidency, the Eisenhower Administration created a plan to overthrow the Fidel Castro regime in Cuba. Central to such a plan, which was structured and detailed by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) with approval from the US Military but with minimal input from the United States Department of State, was the arming of a counter-revolutionary insurgency composed of anti-Castro Cubans. U.S.-trained Cuban insurgents, led by CIA paramilitary officers from the Special Activities Division, were to invade Cuba and instigate an uprising among the Cuban people in hopes of removing Castro from power. On April 17, 1961, Kennedy ordered the previously planned invasion of Cuba to proceed. With support from the CIA, in what's known as the Bay of Pigs Invasion, 1,500 U.S.-trained Cuban exiles, called "Brigade 2506," returned to the island in the hope of deposing Castro. However, Kennedy ordered the invasion to take place without U.S. air support. By April 19, 1961, the Cuban government had captured or killed the invading exiles, and Kennedy was forced to negotiate for the release of the 1,189 survivors. The failure of the plan originated in a lack of dialog among the military leadership, a result of which was the complete lack of naval support in the face of organized artillery troops on the island who easily incapacitated the exile force as it landed on the beach.

Cuban Missile Crisis

The Cuban Missile Crisis began on October 14, 1962, when American U-2 CIA spy planes took photographs of a Soviet intermediate-range ballistic missile site under construction in Cuba. The photos were shown to Kennedy on October 16, 1962. The United States would soon be posed with a serious nuclear threat. Kennedy faced a dilemma: if the U.S. attacked the sites, it might lead to nuclear war with the U.S.S.R., but if the U.S. did nothing, it'd endure the threat of nuclear weapons being launched from close range. Because the weapons were in such proximity, the U.S. might've been unable to retaliate if they were launched pre-emptively. Another consideration was that the U.S. would appear to the world as weak in its own hemisphere.

Many military officials and cabinet members pressed for an air assault on the missile sites, but Kennedy ordered a naval quarantine in which the U.S. Navy inspected all ships

arriving in Cuba. He began negotiations with the Soviets and ordered the Soviets to remove all defensive material that was being built on Cuba. Without doing so, the Soviet and Cuban peoples would face naval quarantine. A week later, he and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev reached a basically cordial, lasting agreement. Khrushchev agreed to remove the missiles subject to U.N. inspections if the U.S. publicly promised never to invade Cuba and quietly removed US missiles stationed in Turkey. Following this crisis, which brought the world closer to nuclear war than at any point before or since, Kennedy was more cautious in confronting the Soviet Union.

Latin America and communism

Arguing that "those who make peaceful revolution impossible, will make violent revolution inevitable," Kennedy sought to contain communism in Latin America by establishing the Alliance for Progress, which sent foreign aid to troubled countries in the region and sought greater human rights standards in the region. He worked closely with Puerto Rican Governor Luis Muñoz Marín for the development of the Alliance of Progress, as well as developments in the autonomy of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

Peace Corps

As one of his first presidential acts, Kennedy asked Congress to create the Peace Corps. In Southeast Asia, Kennedy followed Eisenhower's lead by using limited military action as early as 1961 to fight the Communist forces led by Ho Chi Minh. Proclaiming a fight against the spread of Communism, Kennedy enacted policies providing political, economic, and military support for the unstable French-installed South Vietnamese government, which included sending 16,000 military advisors and U.S. Special Forces to the area. Kennedy also authorized the use of free-fire zones, napalm, defoliants, and jet planes. U.S. involvement in the area escalated until Lyndon Johnson, his successor, directly deployed regular U.S. forces for fighting the Vietnam War.

By July 1963, Kennedy faced a crisis in Vietnam: despite increased U.S. support, the South Vietnamese military was only marginally effective against pro-Communist Viet-Minh and Viet Cong forces. Regarding Ngo Dinh Diem, the Roman Catholic President of South Vietnam, as insufficiently anti-Communist, the U.S. gave secret assurances of non-interference for an impending coup d'état. On November 1 1963, South Vietnamese generals overthrew the Diem government, arresting and soon killing Diem (though the circumstances of his death were obfuscated). Kennedy sanctioned Diem's overthrow. One reason to support the coup was a fear that Diem might negotiate a neutralist coalition government which included Communists, as had occurred in Laos in 1962. Dean Rusk, Secretary of State, remarked "This kind of neutralism...is tantamount to surrender."

Kennedy increased the number of U.S. military in Vietnam from 800 to 16,300. It remains a point of some controversy among historians whether or not Vietnam would've escalated to the point it did had Kennedy served out his full term and been re-elected in 1964. Fueling the debate are statements made by Kennedy's and Johnson's Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara that Kennedy was strongly considering pulling out of Vietnam after the 1964 election. In the film "The Fog of War", not only does McNamara say this, but a tape recording of Lyndon Johnson confirms that Kennedy

was planning to withdraw from Vietnam, a position Johnson states he strongly disapproved of. Additional evidence's Kennedy's National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) #263 on October 11, 1963 that gave the order for withdrawal of 1,000 military personnel by the end of 1963. Nevertheless, given the stated reason for the overthrow of the Diem government, such action would've been a policy reversal, but Kennedy was generally moving in a less hawkish direction in the Cold War since his acclaimed speech about World Peace at American University the previous June 10, 1963.

After Kennedy's assassination, new President Lyndon B. Johnson immediately reversed his predecessor's order to withdraw 1,000 military personnel by the end of 1963 with his own NSAM #273 on November 26, 1963.

West Berlin speech

Under simultaneous and opposing pressures from the Allies and the Soviets, Germany was divided. The Berlin Wall separated West and East Berlin, the latter being under the control of the Soviets. On June 26, 1963, Kennedy visited West Berlin and gave a public speech criticizing communism. Kennedy used the construction of the Berlin Wall as an example of the failures of communism: "Freedom has many difficulties and democracy isn't perfect, but we've never had to put a wall up to keep our people in." The speech's known for its famous phrase "*Ich bin ein Berliner*". Nearly five-sixths of the population was on the street when Kennedy said the famous phrase. He remarked to aides afterwards: "We'll never have another day like this one."

Nuclear Test Ban Treaty

Troubled by the long-term dangers of radioactive contamination and nuclear weapons proliferation, Kennedy pushed for the adoption of a Limited or Partial Test Ban Treaty, which prohibited atomic testing on the ground, in the atmosphere, or underwater, but didn't prohibit testing underground. The United States, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union were the initial signatories to the treaty. Kennedy signed the treaty into law in August 1963.

Ireland

On the occasion of his visit to Ireland in 1963, President Kennedy joined with Irish President Éamon de Valera to form The American Irish Foundation. The mission of this organization was to foster connections between Americans of Irish descent and the country of their ancestry. Kennedy furthered these connections of cultural solidarity by accepting a grant of armorial bearings from the Chief Herald of Ireland. Kennedy had near-legendary status in Ireland, due to his ancestral ties to the country. Irish citizens who were alive in 1963 often have very strong memories of Kennedy's momentous visit. He also visited the original cottage at Dunganstown, near New Ross, where previous Kennedys had lived before emigrating to America, and said: "This's where it all began ..." On December 22, 2006, the Irish Department of Justice released declassified police documents that indicated that Kennedy was the subject of three death threats during this visit. Though these threats were determined to be hoaxes, security was heightened.

Iraq

In 1963, the Kennedy administration backed a coup against the government of Iraq headed by General Abdel Karim Kassem, who five years earlier had deposed the Western-allied Iraqi monarchy. The CIA helped the new Baath Party government led by Abdul Salam Arif in ridding the country of suspected leftists and Communists. In a Baathist bloodbath, the government used lists of suspected Communists and other leftists provided by the CIA, to systematically murder untold numbers of Iraq's educated elite — killings in which Saddam Hussein himself's said to have participated. The victims included hundreds of doctors, teachers, technicians, lawyers and other professionals as well as military and political figures. According to an op-ed in the New York Times, the U.S. sent arms to the new regime, weapons later used against the same Kurdish insurgents the U.S. supported against Kassem and then abandoned. American and UK oil and other interests, including Mobil, Bechtel and British Petroleum, were conducting business in Iraq. Kennedy presided over the first government budget to top the \$100 billion mark, in 1962, and his first budget in 1961 led to the country's first non-war, non-recession deficit. The economy, which had been through two recessions in three years and was in one when Kennedy took office, accelerated notably during his brief presidency. Despite low inflation and interest rates, GDP had grown by an average of only 2.2% during the Eisenhower presidency (scarcely more than population growth at the time), and had declined by 1% during Eisenhower's last twelve months in office. Stagnation had taken a toll on the nation's labor market, as well: unemployment had risen steadily from under 3% in 1953 to 7%, by early 1961.

The economy turned around and prospered during the Kennedy administration. GDP expanded by an average of 5.5% from early 1961 to late 1963, industrial production rose by 15% and motor vehicle sales leapt by 40%. This rate of growth in GDP and industry continued until around 1966, and has yet to be repeated for such a sustained period of time. and, as of 2008, the last military execution. Governor of Iowa Harold Hughes, a death penalty opponent, personally contacted Kennedy to request clemency for Victor Feguer, who was sentenced to death by a federal court in Iowa, but Kennedy turned down the request and Feguer was executed on March 15, 1963. Kennedy commuted a death sentence imposed by military court on seaman Jimmie Henderson on February 12, 1962, changing the penalty to life in prison.

Civil rights

The turbulent end of state-sanctioned racial discrimination was one of the most pressing domestic issues of Kennedy's era. The United States Supreme Court had ruled in 1954 in *Brown v. Board of Education* that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional. However, many schools, especially in southern states, didn't obey the Supreme Court's judgment. Segregation on buses, in restaurants, movie theaters, bathrooms, and other public places remained. Kennedy supported racial integration and civil rights, and during the 1960 campaign he telephoned Coretta Scott King, wife of the jailed Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., which perhaps drew some additional black support to his candidacy. John and Robert Kennedy's intervention secured the early release of King from jail.

In 1962, James Meredith tried to enroll at the University of Mississippi, but he was prevented from doing so by white students. Kennedy responded by sending some 400 federal marshals and 3,000 troops to ensure that Meredith could enroll in his first class. Kennedy also assigned federal marshals to protect Freedom Riders.

As President, Kennedy initially believed the grassroots movement for civil rights would only anger many Southern whites and make it even more difficult to pass civil rights laws through Congress, which was dominated by Southern Democrats, and he distanced himself from it. As a result, many civil rights leaders viewed Kennedy as unsupportive of their efforts.

On June 11, 1963, President Kennedy intervened when Alabama Governor George Wallace blocked the doorway to the University of Alabama to stop two African American students, Vivian Malone and James Hood, from enrolling. George Wallace moved aside after being confronted by federal marshals, Deputy Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach and the Alabama National Guard. That evening Kennedy gave his famous civil rights address on national television and radio. Kennedy proposed what'd become the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Kennedy signed the executive order creating the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women in 1961. Commission statistics revealed that women were also experiencing discrimination. Their final report documenting legal and cultural barriers was issued in October 1963, a month before Kennedy's assassination.

Civil liberties

Responding to allegations that Martin Luther King, Jr. was a communist, the Kennedy's administration agreed to let the Federal Bureau of Investigation wiretap private individuals, including Martin Luther King, Jr. The source of the original allegations was none other than J. Edgar Hoover, who'd a burning hatred for King, whom he viewed as an upstart troublemaker. Although Robert Kennedy, as Attorney General, only gave written approval for limited wiretapping, the Bureau, as was common under Hoover's leadership, extended the clearance to encompass whichever areas of King's life they deemed worthy of examination—without Kennedy's knowledge. In Lyndon Johnson's 1967 State of the Union speech, he referred to the "snooping" and "bugging" of the past, meaning Kennedy's administration, *The Wall Street Journal* wrote that the administration had set prices of steel "by naked power, by threats, by agents of the state security police." Yale law professor Charles Reich wrote in *The New Republic* that the administration had violated civil liberties by calling a grand jury to indict US Steel so quickly. Kennedy wanted to dismantle the selection of immigrants based on country of origin and saw this as an extension of his civil rights policies.

Space program

Kennedy was eager for the United States to lead the way in the space race. Sergei Khrushchev says Kennedy approached his father, Nikita, twice about a "joint venture" in space exploration—in June 1961 and autumn 1963. On the first occasion, the Soviet Union was far ahead of America in terms of space technology. Kennedy first announced the goal for landing a man on the Moon in speaking to a Joint Session of Congress on May 25, 1961, saying

"First, I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade's out, of landing a man on the Moon and returning him back safely to the earth. No single space project in this period will be more impressive to mankind, or more important for the long-range exploration of space; and none will be so difficult or expensive to accomplish."

Kennedy later made a speech at Rice University on September 12, 1962, in which he said

"No nation which expects to be the leader of other nations can expect to stay behind in this race for space."

and

"We choose to go to the Moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they're easy, but because they're hard."

On the second approach to Khrushchev, the Russian was persuaded that cost-sharing was beneficial and American space technology was forging ahead. The U.S. had launched a geostationary satellite and Kennedy had asked Congress to approve more than \$25 billion for the Apollo Project.

Khrushchev agreed to a joint venture in late 1963, but Kennedy was assassinated before the agreement could be formalized. On July 20, 1969, almost six years after JFK's death, Project Apollo's goal was finally realized when men landed on the Moon.

Native American relations

Construction of the Kinzua Dam forced the relocation of the Seneca nation from 10,000 acres of land that they'd occupied under the Treaty of 1794. They were relocated to Salamanca, New York, on the northern shores of land flooded by the dam. Dam construction was approved by Kennedy in 1960 after he was elected, breaking a campaign promise to the Senecas.

Federal Reserve relations

On June 4, 1963, John F Kennedy signed Executive Order No. 11110. This gave the U.S. Treasury the power "to issue silver certificates against any silver bullion, silver, or standard silver dollars in the Treasury." This meant that for every ounce of silver in the U.S. Treasury's vault, the government could introduce new money into circulation. This gave the U.S. government back its power to issue currency, while stripping the Federal Reserve's power to loan money to the government at interest. If enough of those silver certificates were to come into circulation they'd've eliminated the demand for Federal Reserve notes. Executive Order No. 11110's still valid.

Assassination

President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas, at 12:30 p.m. Central Standard Time on November 22, 1963, while on a political trip to Texas. He was shot once in the back, once in the neck and was killed with a final shot to the head. He was pronounced dead at 1:00 p.m. Only 46, President Kennedy died younger than any U.S. president to date. Lee Harvey Oswald, an employee of the schoolbook depository from which the shots were suspected to have been fired, was arrested on charges of the murder of a local police officer and was subsequently charged with the assassination of Kennedy. He denied shooting anyone, claiming he was a, but was killed by Jack Ruby on November 24, before he could be indicted or tried. Ruby was then arrested and convicted of murder. He successfully appealed his conviction and death sentence but

grew ill and died while the date for his new trial was being set.

President Johnson created the Warren Commission — chaired by Chief Justice Earl Warren — to investigate the assassination, which concluded that Oswald was the lone assassin. The results of this investigation have been contested many times since.

Burial

On March 14, 1967, Kennedy's body was moved to a permanent burial plot and memorial at Arlington National Cemetery. The funeral was said by Father John J Cavanaugh.

The Honour Guard at JFK's graveside were the 37th Cadet Class of the Irish Army. JFK was greatly impressed by the Irish Cadets on his last official visit to the Republic of Ireland, so much so that Jackie Kennedy requested the Irish Army to be the Honour Guard at the funeral.

Kennedy's wife, Jacqueline and their two deceased minor children were buried with him later. His brother, the late Senator Robert Kennedy, was buried nearby in 1968. His grave's lit with an "Eternal Flame." Kennedy and William Howard Taft are the only two U.S. Presidents buried at Arlington.

Administration, Cabinet and judicial appointments 1961–1963

The Kennedy Cabinet		
OFFICE	NAME	TERM
President	John F. Kennedy	1961–1963
Vice President	Lyndon B. Johnson	1961–1963
State	Dean Rusk	1961–1963
Treasury	C. Douglas Dillon	1961–1963
Defense	Robert S. McNamara	1961–1963
Justice	Robert F. Kennedy	1961–1963

Postmaster General	J. Edward Day	1961–1963
	John A. Gronouski	1963
Interior	Stewart L. Udall	1961–1963
Agriculture	Orville L. Freeman	1961–1963
Commerce	Luther H. Hodges	1961–1963
Labor	Arthur J. Goldberg	1961–1962
	W. Willard Wirtz	1962–1963
HEW	Abraham A. Ribicoff	1961–1962
	Anthony J. Celebrezze	1962–1963

Judicial appointments

Supreme Court

Kennedy appointed the following Justices to the Supreme Court of the United States:

- Byron Raymond White 1962
- Arthur Joseph Goldberg 1962

Other courts

In addition to his two Supreme Court appointments, Kennedy appointed 21 judges to the United States Courts of Appeals, and 102 judges to the United States district courts.

Image, social life and family

John Kennedy met his future wife, Jacqueline Bouvier, when he was a congressman. They were married a year after he was elected senator, on September 12, 1953. Kennedy and his wife were younger in comparison to presidents and first ladies that preceded them, and both were popular in ways more common to pop singers and movie stars than politicians, influencing fashion trends and becoming the subjects of numerous photo spreads in popular magazines. Although Eisenhower had allowed presidential press conferences to be filmed for television, Kennedy was the first president to ask for them to be broadcast live and made good use of the medium. Jacqueline brought new art and furniture to the White House, and directed a restoration. They invited a range of artists, writers and intellectuals to rounds of White

House dinners, raising the profile of the arts in America. The Kennedy family's one of the most established political families in the United States, having produced a President, three senators, and multiple other Representatives, both on the federal and state level. Jack Kennedy's father, Joseph P. Kennedy was a prominent American businessman and political figure, serving in multiple roles, including Ambassador to the United Kingdom, from 1938-1940.

Outside the White House lawn, the Kennedys established a swimming pool and tree house, while Caroline attended a preschool along with 10 other children inside.

The president was closely tied to popular culture, emphasized by songs such as "Twisting at the White House." Vaughn Meader's *First Family* comedy album—an album parodying the President, First Lady, their family and administration—sold about four million copies. On May 19, 1962, Marilyn Monroe sang for the president at a large birthday party in Madison Square Garden. The charisma of Kennedy and his family led to the figurative designation of "Camelot" for his administration, credited by his wife to his affection for the contemporary Broadway musical of the same name.

Behind the glamorous facade, the Kennedys also experienced many personal tragedies. Jacqueline had a miscarriage in 1955 and a stillbirth in 1956. Their newborn son, Patrick Bouvier Kennedy, died in August 1963. Kennedy had two children who survived infancy. One of the fundamental aspects of the Kennedy family's a tragic strain which has run through the family, as a result of the deaths of many of its members. Jack's eldest brother, Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr., died in World War II, at the age of 29. It was Joe Jr. who was originally to carry the family's hopes for the Presidency. Then of course both Jack himself and his brother Robert died as a result of assassination. Edward had brushes with death, the first in a plane crash and the second as a result of a car accident, known as the Chappaquiddick incident. Caroline Bouvier Kennedy was born in 1957 and's the only surviving member of JFK's immediate family. John F. Kennedy, Jr. was born in 1960, just a few weeks after his father was elected. John died in 1999 when the small plane he was piloting crashed en route to Martha's Vineyard, killing him, his wife and his sister-in-law. Kennedy's first child, a daughter, was stillborn in 1956 and his last child, Patrick Bouvier Kennedy, was born on August 7, 1963, and died two days later of infant respiratory distress syndrome.

In October 1951, during his third term as Massachusetts 11th district congressman, the then 34-year-old Kennedy embarked on a seven-week Asian trip to India, Japan, Vietnam, and Israel with his then 25-year-old brother Robert (who'd just graduated from law school four months earlier) and his then 27-year-old sister Patricia. Because of their eight-year separation in age, the two brothers had previously seen little of each other. This trip was the first extended time they'd spent together and resulted in their becoming best friends in addition to being brothers. Robert was campaign manager for Kennedy's successful 1952 Senate campaign and later successful 1960 presidential campaign. The two brothers worked closely together from 1957 to 1959 on the Senate Select Committee on Improper Activities in the Labor and Management Field when Robert was its chief counsel. During Kennedy's presidency, Robert served in his cabinet as Attorney General and was his closest advisor.

Kennedy came in third (behind Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mother Teresa) in a Gallup list of the most admired people of the twentieth century.

Legacy

Television became the primary source by which people were kept informed of events surrounding John F. Kennedy's assassination. Newspapers were kept as souvenirs rather than sources of updated information. All three major U.S. television networks suspended their regular schedules and switched to all-news coverage from November 22 through November 25, 1963, being on the air for not more than 70 hours (*The New York Times* reported in its September 15, 2001 editions that the TV networks covered the assassination and funeral for more than 70 straight hours), and it was the longest uninterrupted news event until just before 13:00 UTC, September 14, 2001, when the networks were on for 72 hours straight, covering the the terror attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. Kennedy's state funeral procession and the murder of Lee Harvey Oswald were all broadcast live in America and in other places around the world. The state funeral was the first of three in a span of 12 months: The other two were for General Douglas MacArthur and Herbert Hoover.

The assassination had an effect on many people, not only in the U.S. but also among the world population. Many vividly remember where they were when first learning of the news that Kennedy was assassinated, as with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 before it and the September 11, 2001 attacks after it. U.N. Ambassador Adlai Stevenson said of the assassination: "all of us... will bear the grief of his death until the day of ours."

Special Forces have a special bond with Kennedy. "It was President Kennedy who was responsible for the rebuilding of the Special Forces and giving us back our Green Beret," said Forrest Lindley, a writer for the newspaper *Stars and Stripes* who served with Special Forces in Vietnam. This bond was shown at JFK's funeral. At the commemoration of the 25th anniversary of JFK's death, Gen. Michael D. Healy, the last commander of Special Forces in Vietnam, spoke at Arlington Cemetery. Later, a wreath in the form of the Green Beret would be placed on the grave, continuing a tradition that began the day of his funeral when a sergeant in charge of a detail of Special Forces men guarding the grave placed his beret on the coffin.

Ultimately, the death of President Kennedy and the ensuing confusion surrounding the facts of his assassination are of political and historical importance insofar as they marked a turning point and decline in the faith of the American people in the political establishment — a point made by commentators from Gore Vidal to Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. Kennedy's continuation of Presidents Harry S. Truman's and Dwight D. Eisenhower's policies of giving economic and military aid to the Vietnam War preceded President Johnson's escalation of the conflict. This contributed to a decade of national difficulties and disappointment on the political landscape.

Many of Kennedy's speeches (especially his inaugural address) are considered iconic; and despite his relatively short term in office and lack of major legislative changes coming to fruition during his term, Americans regularly vote him as one of the best presidents, in the same league as Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Ronald Reagan. Some excerpts of Kennedy's inaugural address are engraved on a plaque at his grave at Arlington.

He was posthumously awarded the Pacem in Terris Award. It was named after a 1963 encyclical letter by Pope John XXIII that calls upon all people of goodwill to secure peace among all nations. Pacem in Terris's Latin for 'Peace on Earth.'

President Kennedy's the only president to have predeceased both his mother and father. He's also the only president to have predeceased a grandparent. His grandmother, Mary Josephine Hannon Fitzgerald, died in 1964, just over eight months after his assassination.

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