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### The Repercussions Of The JFK Assassination

Shock! Despair! Tragedy! Dread! These are just a few of the many emotions Americans felt after the assassination of John F. Kennedy, when we had to say goodbye to our beloved president. It took place on November 22, 1963, in Texas, where he was shot in his convertible while he was driving with his wife. Kennedy was a successful person who began the accomplishment of great things, such as trying to send the first man to walk on the moon, and the fight for civil rights, yet he never had the chance to see the finished product of his succession. The assassination affected a great deal of people and made us question, "If Kennedy were still alive, would anything be different?" This question gave rise to many conspiracy theories: What would happen in Vietnam if Kennedy hadn't died? Were there multiple shooters at Kennedy's assassination? Was the CIA involved in the Kennedy assassination? Did the Warren Commission investigate properly? Where was the secret service when Kennedy was assassinated? Would the economy be different if Kennedy was still alive? These are a variety of theories people like Graham Rutherford, Maryanne Berry, and Dave Geoffrion have come up with.

In my interview with Berry, she declared that during the assassination of Kennedy, she was 4 years old and knew that the assassination was an important event; that was her first political awakening. She was sitting on the couch learning how to write when her mother started crying, and Berry felt pain and sadness for her mother. Berry's mother had personally grown up near the Kennedys and was friends with John and his siblings at Cape Cod. The Kennedys were loving, smart, and brave people who had a Catholic, military upbringing. In the election,

Kennedy promised to leave church and state separate, which was how he took the lead in the end and won the presidential election. It also lessened prejudice towards the Catholic people when he became a good president who fought for his country. It was known that many Catholics would put up a picture of the pope and Kennedy side by side, like Berry's sister. Kennedy was a good president, and Berry believed that the economy would have changed if he had not died and questioned why the cost of attending college rose so high. Berry believed the government was trying to separate the wage classes further, which made the middle class struggle even more. It led her to question, "Does the government want to educate the population?" Because not many people were able to send their kids to college, which caused a split in the industry, making job choices nearly nonexistent. This led to certain conspiracy theories of hers when she was a teenager. What if Oswald wasn't the mastermind behind the assassination? What if the US government were the ones who wanted to get rid of him because of his beliefs and the good he was doing to his country? Is that why the Secret Service wasn't strong the day he was assassinated? With all these theories flowing through her mind, one thing stood out: never have full trust in the government. Many people thought like this and became more skeptical and aware of the government.

In my interview with Rutherford, he stated that he was a young boy, near the age of five, when the assassination took place. He was at home with his mother when suddenly she gasped at something she heard on the radio, dropped everything that she was doing, and turned on her black-and-white television. This was quite unusual, seeing that the TV was not an all-day thing and that the programs were very controlled, only shown in the evenings. The violence of Kennedy's death was a big shock to everyone. Three days later, Rutherford was watching Kennedy's funeral on TV with his mother, and he remembers how moved he felt with sadness because of how his mother felt during this striking event and that Kennedy's son, a toddler, was

so respectful and standing strong. After his death, around Thanksgiving time, a movie called PT 109 was played in memory of Kennedy, showing how heroic and patriotic he was when he put himself at risk to help the wounded. It's a reminder to us of when Kennedy stated, "Ask not what the country can do for you, but what you can do for your country" (Kennedy). Later on, when Rutherford grew up, he realized that Kennedy could have led the world to a different outcome if he were alive. For example, the Vietnam War. Back in the 1960s, America was supporting South Vietnam against North Vietnam so that communism would not take over. To the Americans, it was a good vs. evil guy bias, and there was no middle ground. It was unknown if Kennedy would have stayed and supported South Vietnam if he hadn't died. But if Kennedy had stayed in the Vietnam War, maybe South Vietnam wouldn't have been communist, and that could have caused a chain of events lessening the amount of communism worldwide. But if this had happened, it could have caused the economic downfall of America due to the debated Guns vs. Butter argument: If you spend all your money on guns for war, there would be nothing left to better your people or country, which leads to the economy spiraling down. When the economy spirals down, it will push the country to spend and borrow, which lets countries go into debt and causes inflation to rise. However, due to Kennedy's assassination, the 25th Amendment was set in place, which states that if the president dies, goes missing, or does not have the right mental capacity to serve their country, the vice president will take their place. Secret service protection has also increased, emphasizing overly protecting the current president and any presidents that were elected before him and less interaction with the common people.

In Geoffrion's interview, the assassination took place when he was 7 years old, in his second-grade classroom. He stated how one of the office helpers came in and talked to his teacher in a hushed tone, then watched as all the adults broke down into sobs. He knew something terrible had happened, as the day was filled with silent chatter at school and carried on

when he came home. He went home to find his mother on the black-and-white TV, with a solemn feeling filling the house. Then he saw what everyone was talking about, Kennedy getting shot in the head. Lots of shots were fired, yet no one knew how many shots were fired exactly, which made people suspicious and ask if there were multiple shooters. To this day, people don't know if there were multiple gunmen or if Oswald alone was involved. The funeral proceeded three days later, and everyone lost it as John Jr., Kennedy's 3-year-old son, stood up straight and saluted his father's coffin as he passed by. It made Geoffrion wonder, "What if this happened to my father? How would I feel?" Everyone was brought to tears at the young boy's respectful gesture. It showed that he understood what happened and knew he wouldn't be able to see his father again. One day later, Oswald was in police custody when someone, later learned to be Jack Ruby, came close to Oswald, pulled a gun on him, and shot him in the stomach. This was another shock, created in a short amount of time, but not many felt bad for Oswald. Geoffrion, as well as many others, had no idea why Kennedy was assassinated, so they theorized that maybe some people hated Kennedy's policies and didn't know if he was going to pull out of the Vietnam War, which would lead to the domino effect of communism taking over, especially a part of our land, Cuba. Americans didn't want communism to knock right on our doorstep. An investigation called the Warren Commission was debated to determine whether or not the crime scene of the assassination was looked over from every angle. Half of the people believe they did and the other half didn't, but they all recognize that the government withheld crucial information that has not been fully disclosed even after 60 years of his death.

Overall, Kennedy's death led to conspiracy theories and questions such as, What if this? What if that? Even if everyone had different thoughts and feelings towards Kennedy, it all came down to the conclusion that if Kennedy were still alive, the world would be a different place. Whether it would be for the worst or the better, the world may never know.

## Interviews

Graham Rutherford

1. How old were you when JFK died?

- Almost 5, exactly  $4\frac{3}{4}$

2. What was your reaction when JFK died?

- Sad and tragic
- Violence of the death was very shocking
- Remembers that TV was not all day thing
  - Program was only in the evenings; a very controlled thing
- He was at home and had the radio on
- Saw mom's reaction to what she heard
  - Mom looked shocked
    - He had never seen reaction such a reaction from her before
  - She went and turned on the tv, which never happens
- They watched the funeral a few days later
  - There was a famous picture of JFK Jr saluting his father
  - "Gee how would you feel if your father died"
- PT109 movie (service in WW2), shown at thanksgiving time
  - Showed Kennedy Pulling a wounded guy; he was heroic, young and filled with excitement
- Talked about how things might have been better if this happened
  - Vietnam wouldn't turn out the way that it did, if they committed more military force to organize support of South Vietnam from the north
    - It was a good guy vs bad guy thing; there was no middle ground

- All views were biased even american views
  - Authoritarian vs democratic political problems
- Kennedy had clear success and failures which led to the conspiracy theories of mis opportunity; a time that could have been improved
  - Perception that we had lost an opportunity as a country
- People started having a sense of distrust that the government covered the assassination up
- People believe in conspiracy theories to fit their story
  - In Rutherford's opinion, “things happen in life and you have to deal with it, it’s not a plan by someone else, sometimes it’s accidental, not clever.

### 3. How do you believe the economy changed?

- Guns and butter economy
- When war needs guns, it leaves nothing for social programs
- US was drawn further in vietnam
  - American military thought just had to show they were serious, so Vietnam would be intimidated
    - Lesson of: Britain didn’t respect american revolution
- Lots of spending led to inflation
- Lots of borrowing led to debt
  - New president tried to solve too many problems at the same time
- There was a divisions in age gap
  - The young and older generation keeps saying that the other generation doesn’t understand and that we have to save the world
- Country struggled to work with each other

- Conspiracy theory of:
  - If Kennedy was alive, would he have been more held back from Vietnam
    - Would he handle transition of change / civil rights better
- People felt that a better opportunity was missed
- The death led to the 25th amendment
  - Now, we need to know where the president needs to be right away
  - Secret service had good service which is why death was shocking, which led to a stronger emphasis on more protection
    - President had to mix less with people
- Secret Service keeps protecting even after they are not president anymore
  - Harry Truman still protected even on walks
  - Presidents now are overly protected
- 4. Do you have any additional things to say about what happened after JFK's assassination?
  - The death deflated ppl and lessened optimism they had
  - In Kennedy's speech he said: "Ask not what the country can do for you, but what you can do for your country"
- 5. Did the Warren Commission, initiated by President Lyndon Johnson, investigate properly?
  - Not many believed that Oswald acted alone and that it was covered up
    - Maybe: Mafia, Cubans, CIA

Maryanne Berry

1. How old were you?

- She was 4 years old and from Boston

2. What is some background knowledge about you?

- She was super excited that Kennedy was the first catholic president candidate
- Her mom loved the Kennedys
- Mom lived on Cape Cod and knew the Kennedys since they had a big house on Cape Cod
- Her mom was a teacher and met them when she was a little girl
- Robert and John were teenagers and went sailing and did other activities with her mother, even though she was younger.
  - Kennedys was older, brave, and kind
- She had a black and white tv
- She was not very political but she knew the Kennedys personally
  - Believed that Robert (Bobby) was smarter than his brother
  - Robert kennedy tried to help his brother with policies to help people
- Her family knew that the Kennedys stood for social justice

3. What was your reaction to the JFK assassination

- She was more upset because her mom was crying
- Remembers the funeral/ mom was crying
  - She knew it was an important event though
- That was her intro to the political world

4. How do you believe the economy changed?

- She wasn't aware or interested at that time



- Later on she knew that the people wanted to evolve into a different type of economy system to support ordinary people, like artists
  - Then there was gas crisis and recession
  - The cost of college rose high
    - Overall the middle class people have been suffering
    - Struggles of middle class life/ made it harder to live
      - Not be able to send their kids to college
      - Led to the question, Does the country not want an educated populace?
  - There was change in industry
    - This explains why there is no division meaning no job choices.
5. Do you have any additional things to say about what happened after JFK's assassination?
- As a teenager she was interested in conspiracy theories
  - It made them skeptical of their government
    - Now-a-days people are still skeptical
    - They are more aware of the government
  - In households there would be a picture of the pope and jfk right next to it
    - Her sister had those pictures framed.

Dave Geoffrion

1. How old were you when JFK died?

- He was in second grade, 7 years old

2. What was your reaction when JFK died?

- He was sitting in class with the teacher in front, when somebody from the office speaks to teacher in hushed tone

- Teacher breaks down crying
- Then teacher told kids that Kennedy was shot

- He was as stunned

- All the kids watched the adults in tears

- It was hushed tones at the school until he left for home

- His mother was upset

- She spent the day watching TV for news

- Next few days they buried him

- He was glued to the TV watching in black in white

- The funeral was in Washington DC

- John Jr (JFK's son) was 3 years old

- "John boy straightens up and salutes his father when sees father in coffin passing by"

- Everyone loses it

3. How do you believe the economy changed?

- Something terrible happened to the country

- He couldn't say then how it impacted it was

4. Did the assassination lead to different government protection

- He thought how could somebody do this to our president?
    - How was/ why was he shot?
    - Where was the security?
    - How did this happen in this modern day?
  - He saw on the TV, after the assassination they arrested Oswald
    - They transferred Oswald to where he was being indicted and suddenly someone came straight towards him with a gun
      - Put gun in belly and pulls trigger
  - It was really chaotic
5. Why do you believe that he was assassinated?
- It was a surprise and shock to everybody
    - No one knew why
  - He guessed some people didn't like Kennedy's policies
    - Going into the vietnam war, then he was about to pull us out
      - Some people disagree that we were leaving
    - If South Vietnam falls to the North a domino effect would happen of communism
      - He believe that people don't' want communist to be at our doorstep, like the North taking over Cuba
6. Do you have any additional things to say about what happened after JFK's assassination?
- He visited the site where Kennedy was assassinated this past summer
    - Stood on site where the cameraman with the 16 mm camera took video of assassination
  - He went to the Texas Depository building, where Oswald shot and killed Kennedy

- Made an impression on him
  - He saw a lady that stopped the traffic to take a selfie where Kennedy was assassinated
    - There's an X on the road where Kennedy was shot
      - He thought how disrespectful, it'd be like taking picture in front of the Auschwitz Concentration Camp
  - This is like hollow ground to him
7. Did the Warren Commission, initiated by President Lyndon Johnson, investigate properly?
- He believes that they investigated it well and that it was a good report
    - Little reason to debate it
    - But believe that some information still needs to be released
  - Lots up conspiracy theories and questions came up from this though
    - For example multiple men conspired the assassination of Kennedy

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