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The Assassination of JFK

John Fitzgerald Kennedy is considered to be one of the most if not the most influential and well respected presidents in American history, despite having only served two and a half years of his first term. JFK's presidency was cut short when he was assassinated on November 22nd of 1963, although this did not change the work that he was able to accomplish throughout his lifetime and short time as president. Jack Kennedy's profound contributions to the free world left behind an enduring American legacy, providing a guiding light for the next generation. Yet, his untimely death still echoes, leaving a lasting impact on our nation today.

JFK was born to a wealthy Irish Catholic family and went on to study at Harvard where he wrote his senior thesis on how unprepared England was for a second World War almost foreshadowing the expansion of the conflict the next year in 1941. Following the attacks on Pearl Harbor JFK accepted a commission into the Navy where he was promoted to Lieutenant and was later given command of a torpedo patrol boat. One night on a routine patrol his boat was rammed by a Japanese destroyer and was split in half setting the ocean ablaze, Kennedy then took charge and single handedly swam into the fire to save one of his sailors and then led what was left of his crew to an island where they were later rescued. If it were not for the leadership of Kennedy in these moments those men would have been lost to sea and the same can be said about our nation without Kennedy at the helm later on in his career. After returning from the Pacific a war hero,

JFK won the 11th congressional district in 1946 and then after serving three terms became a senator in 1952.

As a senator, Kennedy was really launched into the spotlight and that is what gave him the momentum for his 1960 presidential campaign where he defeated the current Vice President and later 37th President Richard Nixon as a complete underdog and became the 35th President of the United States. He took the mantle of power in the United States during the height of the Cold War but was still able to put domestic policy at the forefront of his political agenda. Kennedy advocated for the civil rights movement and took the first steps to lay the groundwork for civil rights legislation to address racial discrimination. He also played a pivotal role in the Space Race by advancing the United States' space program and being the first to publicly announce the goal of landing a man on the moon by the end of the decade. JFK then went on to establish the Peace Corps which is a humanitarian aid organization that still operates today.

All of his domestic policies are dwarfed by his role on the global stage at the peak of the Cold War. Kennedy's foreign policy and his successful navigation through the Cuban Missile and the Berlin Crisis even after the Bay of Pigs incident is the reason why we were able to avoid war and even create a nuclear test ban treaty with our sworn enemy at the time. All of this progress the Kennedy Administration was making came to a screeching halt when he was shot and killed in Dealey Plaza in Dallas, Texas. This moment sent shockwaves throughout the world and its reverberations can still be felt to this day because of how it shaped America's modern political landscape. I asked my grandfather what he remembers about Kennedy's assassination even though he was in India at the time; he told me that he remembers an announcement being made to his seventh grade class that the flag was moved to half mast because a friend of the Prime Minister was killed. This shows how impactful Kennedy's foreign policy was in the short time

that it was in effect because India which was a country much more closely tied to the USSR at the time moved their flags to half mast as a result of his untimely death. In the United States Kennedy's death enraged Americans and even caused Jack Ruby to shoot and kill the supposed killer of Kennedy, Lee Harvey Oswald just two short days later. The loss of Kennedy as mentioned before completely changed the political landscape of our nation as the people lost trust in the government as a result of the conspiracy theories surrounding the president's death being tossed to this side, leaving Americans wondering whether or not his death was an inside job. This took away that innocence and idealization that Kennedy brought with him through his speeches and policies. Kennedy's death also led to Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson taking office and bringing us into the Vietnam War, which leaves us wondering what if Kennedy had not been killed and if we would have been able to avoid entering Vietnam in the first place and maybe have kept that idealization that the American people had when he was in office.

While his legacy might not have reached its full potential had Kennedy completed his presidential term, it remains strong to this day. I can personally testify to this because of my personal experience this summer at a SEAL orientation where during Hell Night one of our instructors quoted the late president saying, "Ask not what your country can do for you but ask what you can do for your country." This quote helped me and my boat crew to remember why we came to that beach in the first place and persevere for the next 36 hours until Hell Night was secured. Another quote from Kennedy that I felt rang throughout the training was that we do these things not because they are easy but because they are hard. The instructors reminded us that everything we were doing was worthy of ringing the bell during every evolution but what my boat crew and I realized is that the trident would mean nothing if it was handed out for free. This is why I truly believe that the legacy of Jack Kennedy lives on through every single hard

working American and will continue to live on as long as there are men and women who embrace the influence of his perseverance and leadership through hardship.

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