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Kennedy's Assassination

Former President John Fitzgerald Kennedy, better known as JFK, was assassinated on November 22nd, 1963, in Dallas Texas. He was with his wife Jackie Kennedy when the shot was made by Lee Harvey Oswald. This point in time was a changing point for the United States of America. At the height of the Cold War, which ranged from 1947 to 1991, the 35th President of a global superpower was murdered. Fear had struck the people. 'Who would do that?' The threat of another war on the horizon was stuck in people's minds for years. This event changed the whole world, and without it, we may not have been able to see the world we live in. But everything can be put as a "what if". The monumental event of JFK's assassination was a defining moment with important changes to the U.S. and left us wondering what would have happened if John F. Kennedy was never assassinated.

After World War II came to an end on September 2, 1945, the United States of America deemed itself a global superpower alongside the Soviet Union. These powerhouses were on two opposite sides of each other; the Communist Soviet Union, and the capitalist United States. Ideals clashed causing Germany to be split into two, with the West being under U.S. influence and the East being under the control of the Soviet Union. In the following years, the Cold War would end up taking up most of everyone's thoughts. In 1960, we voted for John F. Kennedy to become the 35th President of the United States of America, with his Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson. JFK's campaign led to the announcement of how he would work to help our country.

His economic plan helped the country into its longest-sustained expansion since World War II. Kennedy wanted to work on ways to help people in poverty and those who required help. Sadly, during his campaign in November of 1963, he was killed.

I interviewed my step-father, Mark Colin, who was born in 1955, about how he felt during this time. Mark explained to me: “When I was just eight years old I was in class and the teacher started crying. She told us that the President had just been assassinated. After school was let out, and my mother picked me up, I remember her crying as we drove back home.” Mark, when he was explaining his story, had a look in his eye. I could tell that he was still somewhat surprised about what happened. “The whole country went into mourning. Everybody was so sad and could not believe what had happened.” As he was speaking I began to understand that Kennedy meant a lot to him and his family, and how this sudden onset of death changed everything.

Kennedy’s death didn’t just affect the American people for a short period, it changed the U.S. forever. Mark told me, “This was a pivotal point in U.S. history. We were not far removed from World War II and the Korean War. There was a lack of excitement about the future direction America would take.” America was at a crossroads, the people needed a leader. “Kennedy brought this all into focus and inspired Americans to rise up and seize the moment. We felt like we could accomplish whatever we could put our mind to.” All eyes were fixed on the United States, waiting to see what choice they would ultimately make. Will this make or break our country? It made us. The U.S. took a turn to improvement with the Civil Rights Movement and influenced countries all over the world to change for the better. After Kennedy’s untimely death, people following up after him took it upon themselves to fulfill his legacy.

Lyndon B. Johnson, the 36th president of the United States, and Richard Nixon, the 37th President, took it personally to follow in JFK's footsteps. To make America great again.

A question that gets asked regularly is "What would the U.S. look like today if President Kennedy was never assassinated?" I have been asked this a significant amount of times in and out of school. I believe that without Kennedy's death, we would not have unified as a country when we were attacked by a terrorist group on September 11, 2001. I asked Mark, a man who loves conspiracy theories and theoretical questions, about his opinion about the controversial event. Mark looked at me and sighed. He explained to me, "If Kennedy was not assassinated I think personal scandals would have affected his ability to lead. His passing allowed Lyndon B. Johnson to take over and create all the social network and civil rights legislation, and get it passed." Mark believes that if Kennedy was still alive today, we wouldn't be the country we are; the land of the free and the home of the brave. We have been able to endure difficult times because of the demise of one of the nation's most accomplished presidents.

By listening to many different generations, and many different ideals I have heard and agreed that without the events of November 22, 1963, unfolding we would not be as strong and proud of a country as we are today. Since his passing, we have been able to improve our society and government to become one of the most influential countries in the world. People to this day still hold John F. Kennedy in high regard. We have so much to thank him for, like his economic reforms and his support in the civil rights movement that would help everyone to reach a form of equality. History classes all over our country speak about how his death improved the country and made way for his successors to fulfill his dreams. Even so, many people still ask the controversial question about our 35th president, and what life would be like now if he were to have lived past November of 1963.