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\*\*\*Emergency Room doctors recall  
treating President Kennedy.

"Oh my God, they have shot my husband. I love you, Jack." Those were the words Mrs. John F. Kennedy cried as she cradled the head of her mortally wounded husband.

Few Americans will forget that infamous day 20 years ago, Nov. 22, 1963. Many can vividly recall exactly where they were and what they were doing when a news flash circled the globe, "Kennedy seriously wounded, perhaps fatally by assassin's bullet."

A handful of people have a unique recollection of that fateful afternoon in Dallas. They were the physicians who treated the President when he was rushed to Parkland Memorial Hospital.

"The President has been shot, they're bringing him to the Emergency Room and they'd like some physicians there right away." That's what the telephone operator told Ronald Jones, M.D. He had been eating lunch when he answered a "stat" (emergency) page issued over the hospital's public address system. At the time Jones was a senior surgical resident, and one of the first physicians to treat the fatally wounded President.

"Seeing him on the cart, seeing Mrs. Kennedy at the foot of the cart over in the corner (of the treatment room)...when you think back, you think about it." Those are the most vivid images etched in Jones's memory.

It was 12:30 p.m. when three shots rang out from the sixth floor window of the Texas School Book Depository building. Jones says, "I was in the dining room. I took the first M.D. call paging for people. So, I got up and called the operator." Jones then told colleagues in the dining room, "You all aren't going to believe this, but the President has been shot."

Jones and others headed for Parkland's Trauma Room One. "When we got there, the President was already there, and Mrs. Kennedy was there, too. He had apparently just gotten there seconds before we did. The room was rapidly filled with people. Jim Carrico (Charles J. Carrico, M.D.), the second year resident on-duty in the Emergency Room, was with him. He thought he saw some agonal respirations. Because of that, we decided we would try to resuscitate him. Without having looked very closely at the head injury, it was obvious that he was in shock and if he



was breathing, he wasn't breathing very much."

Carrico was the first physician to see President Kennedy in the E.R. He noted that the President was blue-white or ashen in color; had slow, spasmodic, agonal respiration without any coordination; made no voluntary movements; had his eyes open with the pupils dilated without reaction to light; evidenced no palpable pulse and had a few chest sounds that were thought to be heart beats. The Report of the Warren Commission says that on the basis of these findings Carrico concluded that President Kennedy was still alive.

Carrico found two wounds: a small bullet wound in the front lower neck and an extensive wound to the President's head. He noted that a sizable portion of the skull was missing.

Carrico attempted to mechanically assist the President's breathing. He inserted a tube past the neck wound and connected it to an automatic respirator.

At that point, Jones and Malcolm Perry, M.D. arrived in the treatment room. Perry assumed direction of the medical team's efforts. Jones recalls, "Malcolm said, 'I'll do a tracheotomy and you do a cutdown.'" Jones then made an incision over a vein in the President's left upper arm. The cutdown facilitated the passage of a needle into the vein for administration of transfused blood and fluids. "By then the room was full of physicians. I really couldn't get over to the right side because the room was so full of people. By that time you could not move from one side of the cart to the other. The nurse was handing trays over the tops of people's heads."

Blood and fluids were administered via cutdowns in the left arm and right leg. Hydrocortisone was administered because of the President's known adrenal insufficiency. The infusion of liquids, external cardiac massage and the establishment of the airway allowed the physicians to maintain a semblance of blood circulation. A faint pulse was detected.

Jones says, "All that was done in less than 10 minutes. Then we got an EKG machine (a device that measures the electrical activity of the heart) hooked up to him and he just had a straight line. There was no evidence of any cardiac activity at all. At that point, they called a priest."

The effort to revive the President lasted some 25 minutes. While other physicians vainly tried to resuscitate the President, chief neurosurgeon Kemp Clark, M.D., evaluated the large, gaping head wound. In his report on the President's treatment, Clark noted the absence of any neurological response.

The Warren Commission concluded, "President Kennedy could have survived the neck injury, but the head wound was fatal. From a medical viewpoint President Kennedy was alive when he arrived at Parkland Hospital. But his situation was hopeless, and the extraordinary efforts of the doctors to save him could



not help but to have been unavailing."

When the electrical silence of the President's heart was observed, Clark pronounced President John Fitzgerald Kennedy dead at 1 p.m.

"I was the senior person present," Clark recalls. "I just pronounced him dead and went about my business." It was Clark who informed Mrs. Kennedy that her husband had expired.

Mrs. Kennedy remained in the room while the President was being treated, says Jones. "Someone asked her if she wanted to step outside, and she said 'I'd rather stay,' and so she stayed. She did step outside the treatment room for a little while, waiting for the priest to come, but the majority of the time she stayed in the room at the side and at the foot of the table."

In many respects, treating the President was just another trauma case for those who were there. Jones remembers, "Obviously there is some emotion there because of the circumstances. But you react the way you do because you have done it so many times before with various patients. We treated him the same way we would treat anybody else. We knew who he was and the importance of it, but we wouldn't have done anything any differently with other patients under similar circumstances."

"He was a very sick young man, and he was dead. I have seen a lot of them like that," says Clark. "I think anyone who was involved in that kind of thing wished he had been somewhere else at that time. But I certainly don't have any feeling of 'Why me, oh Lord?' That's my job, I'm here to do that."

Charles Baxter, M.D., another physician to treat the President recalls, "As soon as we knew we had nothing more medical to do, we all backed off from the man with the reverence that one has for one's President. We did not continue to be doctors from that point on, we became citizens again. And there were probably more tears in that treatment room than in the surrounding 100 miles."

To this day, Clark still receives calls and letters regarding the President's death. "The only regret I have is that I'm constantly bothered by a bunch of damn fools who want me to make some kind of controversial statement about what I saw, what was done or that he is still alive on the 12th floor of Parkland Hospital or some foolish thing like that.

"Since these guys are making their money by writing this kind of provocative books, it annoys me, frankly. They call me, and my policy is not to talk to anybody or respond to any letters about it.

"I'm perfectly content with what the Warren Commission turned up with, (that Oswald, acting alone, killed the President) and I don't see any reason why fuel should be added to that particular fire."

The frantic scene in the Emergency Room, in many respects,



would be replayed two days later. On Nov. 24, another shooting victim was rushed to Parkland. This time it was Lee Harvey Oswald, the alleged Presidential assassin. Millions of horrified television viewers saw Jack Ruby step in front of Oswald and fire, point-blank, a shot into his belly.

Again, Jones was in the Emergency Room. "We didn't know what else could happen after Oswald got shot. It was perhaps predictable in one sense, but it was a surprise that it happened -- to have to go through all that again. We were a little more psychologically prepared for it, I guess, than we had been the first go-around."

Today Jones, Baxter and Clark are still affiliated with Parkland Hospital, as teaching physicians and faculty members of the neighboring University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas. Jones and Baxter are professors of Surgery and Clark remains professor and chairman of Neurosurgery. Carrico is now chairman of Surgery at The University of Washington School of Medicine, Seattle. The medical equipment in Parkland's Trauma Room One is now in National Archives, preserved for its historical value.

Americans will never forget the horror of blood and bullets that began on a Friday afternoon and ended in a televised murder two days later. Those who worked in the Emergency Room have many private memories that they will not share. But a nation remembers -- a silent young widow, her pink suit stained with her husband's blood, removing her wedding ring and placing it on the finger of the man she loved.

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