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John F. Kennedy History, Memory, Legacy: An Interdisciplinary Inquiry

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www.und.edu/JFKConference

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Introduction

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On September 25, 1963, President John F. Kennedy traveled to Grand Forks, North Dakota, greeted its citizens while touring the city, and delivered a speech at the University of North Dakota Field House, which addressed important issues still vital today: environmental protection, conservation of natural resources, economic development, the struggle between democracy and totalitarianism, and the importance of education and public service. The University conferred on the President an honorary Doctor of Laws degree. Over 20,000 people assembled on campus that day to see JFK -- the largest campus gathering in UND history. Tragically, less than two months later, the thirty-fifth President of the United States was assassinated in Dallas.

To commemorate the forty-fifth anniversary of the President's Grand Forks visit, and in tandem with the University's one hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary, UND organized a September 25-27, 2008 conference to foster interdisciplinary discussion and analysis of the issues addressed in JFK's UND speech, as well as other significant issues of the Kennedy era, including civil rights, space exploration, the nuclear threat, and the influence of the media on presidential politics. The Conference also explored issues related to the President's assassination within weeks of his UND visit. With one of the finest aerospace schools in the country, a nationally renowned Energy & Environmental Research Center, an innovative Peace Studies Program and faculty expertise in areas as diverse as international law, Beat poetry, voting rights, supply-side economics, and forensic anthropology, the University of North Dakota was an ideal venue for this interdisciplinary exploration of the Kennedy era.

Moreover, scholars from institutions as varied as Grinnell College and the University of Maryland joined UND faculty in examining Kennedy-era themes through various academic lenses, including literature, political science, film, economics, philosophy, law, history and the sciences. Critical contributions were also made by a former Deputy Assistant Attorney General for the U.S. Department of Justice, Civil

Rights Division, a United States District Court Judge, and academics from other countries, such as Britain and Germany.

Anchoring the Conference were keynote addresses by President Kennedy's Special Counsel, Ted Sorensen, the last living member of JFK's inner-circle, and Richard Reeves, his biographer and award-winning author of what is considered by many to be the authoritative work on JFK's administration – *President Kennedy: Profile of Power*. Finally, the UND Eternal Flame, at the heart of campus, provided a fitting locale for a JFK memorial service.

From all the scholarship and discussion of those three scintillating days, we present this publication of Conference proceedings, which includes the papers presented and transcripts of significant addresses and discussions. We are very pleased to make this scholarship easily accessible to the public through this on-line format.

The materials presented here represent a fascinating mix of eyewitness personal accounts of the Kennedy years and scholarly analysis of perhaps the era's most critical issues. Some of the papers offer ground-breaking research into such topics as East German intelligence gathering in connection with JFK's Berlin visit, the impetus behind development of a consular relations treaty, and the Kennedy administration's policy on civilian use of nuclear power. Other papers suggest compelling revisions of conventional wisdom on familiar topics such as the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Vietnam War. And, when viewed in their entirety, the papers have great breadth.

That breadth is apparent from the beginning. Part II of the compilation covers the topic "JFK, Literature, and the 1960s." This section features works on the poetry of the early portion of the decade, including Dr. Heidi Czerwiec's insightful look at the period's Confessional and Beat poets ("The Long Shadow of the Confessional and Beat Poets") and Katie Stephenson's brilliant exposé on the relationship between Allen Ginsberg and the music of the era ("'A Revival of Poetry and Song:' Allen Ginsberg, Rock and Roll, and the Return to the Bardic Tradition"). Other papers in the section touch on the JFK assassination, including Lucia Cimpean's trenchant analysis of Don DeLillo's Lee Harvey Oswald *roman à clef*, *Libra* ("Living and Writing on the Edge in Don DeLillo's *Libra*"), and Michael Snyder's fascinating examination of alleged assassination conspirator Clay Shaw's work as a playwright and its connection to Shaw's possible involvement in the conspiracy.

Part III of the compilation, "JFK and the World," considers President Kennedy's impact on foreign policy and space exploration. Some of the topics covered here one would expect to find, such as the Peace Corps, Vietnam, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the Space Program. "Experiencing the Peace Corps" captures an interdisciplinary panel discussion moderated by UND Professor Robin David. The interlocutors were UND

Professors and Peace Corps volunteers Kathy Gershman (Bolivia, 1967-69, healthcare), Michael Beard (Iran, 1968-70, English education), Joe Vacek (Georgia, 2006, judicial reform and English education), and Cory Enger (Niger, 2006-08 sustainable agriculture). Each described his or her individual Peace Corps experiences, which provide great perspective as they took place during the bookend decades of the program in the 1960s and the 2000s.

Many wonder if the United States would have descended into the bloody abyss of the Vietnam War if President Kennedy had been reelected in 1964. In "JFK and Vietnam: An Unanswered Legacy in Film and History," Scott Racek focuses on the CIA-sponsored November 1963 assassination of Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem in trying to disabuse readers of the notion, accepted in the popular imagination and in the cinema, that JFK would have withdrawn all American troops from Vietnam had he lived. This analysis is rounded out by Albert Berger in his paper "The Indochina Bind: John Kennedy and Vietnam." Dr. Berger explains that the Vietnam quagmire was the unfortunate byproduct of Democrats' worst fears about the potential of a new McCarthyism that might have turned them out of office had they abandoned Indochina to the Communists.

Dr. Berger also demythologizes the thirteen most dramatic days of the Kennedy presidency in his paper "The Cuban Missile Crisis and New Narratives of the Cold War." The paper reveals that, far from the omnipotent nuclear menace portrayed by the American press and politicians in the period leading up to and during the Crisis, the U.S.S.R. was in a vastly inferior military position to the United States. Dr. Berger establishes that Khrushchev used bluff and bluster to compensate for the inferiority but after his ouster -- due in large part to the Crisis -- the Soviets invested in closing the vast military gap and inaugurating the policy of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD).

Finally, there has always been much speculation about President Kennedy's motives in ramping up the American space program for a 1960s moon launch. In "'We Choose to Go to the Moon': JFK and the Race for the Moon," Richard Collin details and analyzes the Cold War strategic thinking behind President Kennedy's push to land a man on the moon by decade's end. Given the decline of NASA in recent years and its fight to remain relevant, this is a valuable and timely contribution.

The balance of Part III occupies ground less trodden. Much scholarship on JFK's Cold War foreign policy has centered on the administration's dealings with the Soviet Union. But President Kennedy never lost sight of the era's other Communist behemoth, China. In his paper "There Are Bigger Issues at Stake": The Administration of John F. Kennedy and United States-Republic of China Relations, 1961-63," Dr. Charles Pellegrin explores the evolution of JFK's China policy. His is a well researched examination of how that policy began to veer away from total support of Chiang Kai-shek's Republic of

China and position itself to improving relations with Mao Tse-tung's People's Republic of China.

Similarly, foreign policy experts have shed relatively little light on the Kennedy administration's achievements in the area of consular relations. Cindy Buys helps fill this void by offering fascinating insights on the Kennedy State Department's pivotal role in codifying the international law of consular relations. "JFK's Legacy Regarding Consular Relations Law," explores the JKF-orchestrated negotiation of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, the bilateral U.S.-U.S.S.R. Consular Convention, and the continued importance of consular treaties today.

Finally, Dr. Robert Waite's ground-breaking scholarship in his paper "JFK, Berlin and the Berlin Crises: 1961-1963" rounds out this Part of the compilation. Based on his original primary-source research of East German Secret Police ("Stasi") archives, as well as reviews of East German newspapers from the period, Dr. Waite shows that East German officials and the media considered President Kennedy's summer 1963 "*Ich bin ein Berliner*" visit to Berlin quite provocative. He also demonstrates the surprising level of grief East Germans experienced shortly thereafter in the wake of JFK's assassination.

Part IV of this compilation, "JFK and the United States," turns the focus inward and examines some of JFK's domestic policies. It begins with perhaps the most important domestic issue JFK faced -- civil rights. From the Freedom Riders to the March on Washington, with its famous "I Have a Dream" speech, there are many powerful associations between the Kennedy years and the Civil Rights Movement. This section benefits from the scholarship of Brian Landsberg, a former Deputy Assistant Attorney General of the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division. As a Division line-attorney in the 1960s, Professor Landsberg operated on the Movement's front lines and provides his insights about it in his paper "The Kennedy Justice Department's Enforcement of Civil Rights: A View from the Trenches."

Professor Landsberg's paper calls into question the notion that, despite some of the powerful symbolism of its era, the Kennedy administration was ultimately ineffectual with respect to promoting and securing equal rights for America's black citizens. He demonstrates that, without Congressional authorization, and in addition to its Herculean efforts to secure voting rights and equal access to interstate transportation for African-Americans, the Division was active in devising ways to combat racial segregation of public schools. To place all that in context, Professor Landsberg has also contributed to Part IV a "Civil Rights Chronology: January 1961-November 1963."

This section concludes by analyzing a topic little explored until now: JFK's energy policy. In "Atomic Power, Fossil Fuels, and the Environment: Lessons Learned and the Lasting Impact of the Kennedy Energy Policies," Joshua Fershee contributes

innovative research and analysis regarding the complexity of President Kennedy's energy policy and its visionary global approach. Professor Fershee demonstrates that JFK sought to promote conservation while appropriating nuclear steam generation for civilian energy use and expanding American infrastructure for coal and electricity. He concludes that, from a strategic perspective, JFK's bold and expansive vision should still serve as a model for modern policymakers.

Many commentators have noted that, for politically strategic purposes and unlike any president before him, John F. Kennedy used the media to establish a glamorous image and style, posthumously embodied in the term "Camelot." Part V of the compilation, "JFK – Media, Image and Legacy," considers the implications of this trend-setting presidential phenomenon. It begins by chronicling early opposition views of Camelot in Laura Jane Gifford's paper "Kennedy's Loyal Opposition: *National Review* and the Development of a Conservative Alternative -- January-August 1961." Next, Dr. Richard M. Filipink examines the evolution of JFK's image over time in "Primarily a Political Problem": Constructing the Image of the Kennedy Presidency, 1961-Present." Using the Cuban Missile Crisis and Vietnam as analytic prisms, Dr. Filipink traces the development of JFK's public persona from Cold Warrior-icon, as crafted by Kennedy biographers and historians in the 1960s and 1970s, through a 1980s transition period, to a new statesman-figure created for the 1990s and 21st century.

In the Section's third paper "JFK: The Exceptional Idea," Dr. James Boys explains how the term "*Kennedyesque*" entered into our political and cultural lexicon and how it continues to exert considerable influence on the American national psyche. Dr. Boys demonstrates how all office seekers and statesmen try, to one degree or another, to partake of or co-opt the Kennedy style but ultimately come up short because their efforts are measured against what Boys describes as the "sentimental constructs of the Kennedy golden age." Finally, Mary Stromme concludes Part V by specifying the Kennedy impact on the most recent presidential contest. In her paper "Rhetoric in the Campaign Website of Barack Obama," Stromme recalls the central role of television in JFK's political fortunes and compares it to the comparable role played by the internet in the political rise of our most recent president, Barack Obama.

Part of the Kennedy mystique is inextricably bound up in his assassination – the poignancy of a vibrant leader violently and graphically cut down in the prime of life amid an adoring public. Part VI, "The Death of the President," attempts to measure what happened that day in Dallas, both in terms of emotional impact and forensic investigation. With regard to the former, Eleanor Williams connects her personal anguish of that day to the iconography of the Kennedy presidency and to larger national themes in her paper "That Day in Dallas." Similarly, Dr. Steve Andrews's paper "'I Looked Up and I Looked Down': JFK, Mrs. D, and the Space of Citizenship," explains how November 22, 1963's collective grief brought the first glimmerings of an American identity to a

young adopted boy taken from his foreign birthplace and brought to an unwelcoming rural America. Finally, in "The Day Kennedy Was Assassinated," David Marshall describes the moment that time and all of humanity seemed to stand still in Grand Central Station when it was announced that President Kennedy had been killed.

The balance of Part VI deals with the evidentiary and forensic aspects of the assassination. Many Americans reject the conclusion of the Warren Report that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone and believe there was a conspiracy behind President Kennedy's assassination. Gary Severson and John Williams point to possible North Dakota conspiracy links in their scholarship. In his piece "Three Gunshots at Life," Severson tells the story of *Life* magazine Managing Editor Edward K. Thompson, a native North Dakotan who was closely connected to the infamous "Zapruder film" – the most complete visual recording of JFK's murder. Does Thompson's connection to the Zapruder film leave possible clues about an assassination conspiracy? In a separate paper, "Lee Harvey Oswald: North Dakota and Beyond," Severson teams up with John Williams to demonstrate that there may have been a Lee Harvey Oswald double living in Stanley, North Dakota during the 1950s. They contend this doppelganger might have been controlled by the United States government for eventual use in the alleged assassination cabal. Looking at the bigger picture, James Fetzer presents a treasure trove of photographic and diagrammatic material that he believes points to a conspiracy to assassinate President Kennedy in "Dealey Plaza Revisited: What Happened to JFK?"

Finally, the Conference was honored and enriched by the presentation of U.S. District Judge John R. Tunheim, who had previously served as the Chair of the JFK Assassination Records Review Board. In "Workings of the Assassination Records Review Board," Judge Tunheim traces the Board's origins and explains how it pursued the painstaking work that led to the release of thousands of new assassination-related documents to the public.

Although it appears first in the compilation, I have reserved Part I for last here to highlight its moving and meaningful impact. Titled simply "The Presidency," it includes the timeless words of President Kennedy himself in the transcript of his address to the University of North Dakota on September 25, 1963. And it provides the insights of the man who wrote that speech for JFK, Special Counsel to the President Ted Sorensen. I felt privileged to have a discussion with Mr. Sorensen on the stage of the Chester Fritz Auditorium forty-five years to the day after President Kennedy's historic appearance on the UND campus. In that conversation, whose transcript is titled "I Was Chief of Staff for Ideas," Mr. Sorensen shared fascinating personal insights about his relationship with the president, his work at the White House, and his participation in some of the most significant events of the twentieth century, including the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Part I also includes the moving words of UND President Robert Kelley at the memorial to President Kennedy held at the campus's Eternal Flame. Finally, it concludes with the remarks of perhaps the finest chronicler of the Kennedy administration – award-winning author and journalist Richard Reeves. His remarks, titled "President Kennedy: Profile of Power," dig deeply into the territory covered by Reeves's acclaimed 1992 book of the same title. Focusing chronologically on one 48-hour period in June 1963, Reeves demonstrates that, unlike conventional presidential histories that handle themes individually in serial fashion, the actual experience of the presidency, in real time, consists of several themes intersecting simultaneously. In this case, he considers JFK's drafting and delivering the epochal "peace speech," the stand-off at the schoolhouse door with George Wallace as the University of Alabama was being desegregated, the drafting and delivering of JFK's great civil rights address immediately after the stand-off, the iconic self-immolation of the South Vietnamese monk, and the assassination of NAACP leader Medgar Evers. It is a fascinating exposition.

I would like to thank Drs. John Delane Williams and Robert G. Waite for their devotion and hard work on this project. Without them, and their fine organizational and editing skills, this publication would never have seen the light of day. I would also like to thank UND Conference Service's Robyn von Ruden, who was instrumental in helping us organize and conduct the conference, and Doris Boernhoft, UND Computer Services, who helped us integrate this material into the online format. I must also express my gratitude to those who worked with us on the JFK Conference Committee and to the University for its tremendous support. It has been a team effort from the beginning.

The University of North Dakota sesquicentennial celebration seemed a fitting framework in which to commemorate JFK's historic UND visit. We believe this publication beautifully captures the creative and interdisciplinary spirit of that commemoration. Americans in 1963 no doubt understood that President Kennedy chose UND for his North Dakota visit because it was the flagship university of a great state. More than four decades on, our national gathering to discuss JFK's life and legacy served as a welcome reminder that UND remains one of the premier higher learning and research institutions on the Great Plains. We are grateful and proud to be a part of this intellectually vibrant campus at the country's center and from this unique vantage point we are thrilled to reach out to the world at large and give it this publication about our nation's thirty-fifth president. We hope you will enjoy it.

PART I
THE PRESIDENCY

Chapter 1

Address at the University of North Dakota September 25, 1963[1]

President John F. Kennedy

Mr. President, Governor Guy, Senator Burdick, Secretary Udall, Senator Mansfield, Senator Metcalf, other Members of the Senate who may be here, ladies and gentlemen:

Politics is a somewhat abused profession in the United States. Artemus Ward once said, "I am not a politician and my other habits are good also." But I would like to say it has some advantages. It permitted me to go from being a somewhat indifferent lieutenant in the United States Navy to becoming Commander in Chief in the short space of 15 years, and it has also permitted me to become a graduate of this university in 30 seconds, when it takes you 4 years. So in determining what career you should follow, you might consider this lowly profession.

I am glad to be here at this college. Prince Bismarck, who was named after Bismarck, North Dakota, once said that one-third of the students of German universities broke down from overwork, another third broke down from dissipation, and the other third ruled Germany. I do not know which third of the student body from this school is here today, but I am confident that I am talking to the future rulers of not only North Dakota, but the United States, in the sense that all educated citizens bear the burden of governing, as active participants in the democratic process.

I have come on a journey of 5 days across the United States, beginning in Pennsylvania and ending in California, to talk about the conservation of our resources, and I think that it is appropriate that we should come here to North Dakota where the whole struggle for the maintenance of the natural resources of this country, for the development of the natural resources of this country, in a sense, began. I do not argue whether it was Harvard University or North Dakota that made Theodore Roosevelt such a man and such a conservationist, but I am sure that his years here in North Dakota helped make him realize how expensive, how wasteful was indifference to this great resource

[1] "Address at the University of North Dakota. September 25, 1963," *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, John F. Kennedy, 1963* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1964), 715-719.

and how valuable it could become. He put it on much more than the material plane. He said it was the moral obligation of a society, in order to preserve that society, to maintain its natural endowment.

In 1963 we face entirely different problems than we faced at the time of Theodore Roosevelt. The fact of the matter is that because we have so much in surplus in the United States, there is some feeling in many parts of the country, and I am sure not here, that we can afford to waste what we have. I don't believe that at all. I think what we have to decide is how we can put it to best use, how we can provide in 1963, and in the whole decade of the 1960's, a use of our natural and scientific and technological advances, so that in the years to come the 350 million people living in the United States in the year 2000 can enjoy a much richer and happier life than we do today. And unless we make the proper decisions today on how we will use our water and our air, and our land, and our oceans, unless we make the comparable effort, an effort comparable to what Theodore Roosevelt and others made fifty years ago, we are going to waste it.

The fact of the matter is that, in the field of conservation, every day that is lost is a valuable opportunity wasted. Every time, particularly in the East where they have such a massive concentration of population—every time an acre of land disappears into private development or exploitation, an acre of land that could be used for the people, we have lost a chance. We will never get it back. The fact of the matter is that land will rise in value, and unless we set it aside and use it wisely today, in 1970 or '75 we won't have the chance. As you know, along the Atlantic coast, nearly all the sea, the beach, is owned by comparatively few people. We were able to set aside, a year ago, Cape Cod Park, which is near to all the people of New England. We are talking about doing the same on the Delaware River. We are talking about doing the same in northern Indiana, near Gary. We have to seize these opportunities--we are now talking about doing the same in northern Wisconsin--we have to seize these opportunities to set aside these wilderness areas, these primitive areas, these fresh water areas, these lakes. We have to set them aside for the people who are going to come after us.

Now we have to not only to set them aside, but we have to develop them. We have to purify our water. We have to make this a richer country in which to live, and it can be done. This State of North Dakota should know it better than any. This state had, 30 years ago, three out of every hundred farms lit by electricity, and now, nearly all are. What was 30 years ago a life of affluence, in a sense today is a life of poverty. This country moves ahead. This is a much richer country than it was 15 years ago, but it is so because decisions were made in those days which made it possible for us to live much better today. You cannot live in North Dakota, you cannot fly over this State, without realizing how wise were those who went before us and how necessary it is that we make the proper decision.

Theodore Roosevelt once said that the White House is a great pulpit, from which to preach, and I would like to preach not only for the vigorous life which he preached for us physically, but also for us in our time, facing entirely different problems, to make the same wise, vigorous decisions which he made for the conservation of our natural resources so that you and your children can enjoy this great and rich country. Nature has been so generous to us that we have mistreated her. Now, when our country is becoming increasingly crowded, when science and technology waste so much of what we have, we have to realize that time is running out for us.

So we come on this trip to remind the American people of what they have, and to remind the people what they must do to maintain it. Here, only a few minutes from here, is the Garrison Dam. Just to show you what decisions made by us today can do for the people in North Dakota in the 1970's, that one dam alone will have a water area, man made, as great as the total water area in North Dakota when this project was begun in 1946. Nature put the lakes there fifty years ago. Now, man makes them. And man improves what nature has done. I have strongly supported the Garrison reclamation project, which will use water stored behind the Garrison Dam, and I am confident it will make a major contribution to the development of America.

This is a matter of concern to all Americans. I think sometimes we read too much about the problems of particular areas, and maybe North Dakota may not be so interested in the beaches along the Atlantic coast or along the Gulf, or along the West Coast, and people in the East not so much interested in the Garrison project in North Dakota, which is far away, but this country is not far away. It is closer than it has ever been before. When you can fly across it in 5 hours, when more importantly than transportation is the fact that we are one people, living in 50 States and living in hundreds of communities, what happens on the East Coast where your children may some day live, what happens in the Middle West, where the children of the people in New England may some day live, and what happens on the West Coast, are of concern to of all of us.

Therefore, this impressive chain of dams, which includes Garrison, has been called with some accuracy the Great Lakes of the Missouri, which belongs to all of the people. Behind these dams, the Big Muddy is turning blue, and soil is being saved, crops are being irrigated, recreation opportunities are growing. And this whole problem of recreation is going to be one of one of our most promising and important areas of human activity in the next 10 or 15 years.

Automation, which is a technical word, and which brings grief, can also bring a good deal of pleasure. If you realize that we are moving more on the railroads of the United States with half as many people working on them as worked 15 years ago, the question is, what has happened to those 50 percent of the people and what are they doing,

and how are they spending their time? And what is true on the railroads is true on the farms, where with a steadily diminishing population, we farm more and more.

How are we going to find work for those people? Those of you who are studying here and are concerned with the social sciences, which you must be, must wonder how you are going to find work for the millions of people who are coming into the market every year seeking jobs. I said, in speaking on our tax bill the other night, that we are going to have to find 10 million jobs in 2 ½ years. How are we going to find them? What individual actions must be taken and what national actions must be taken to find 10 million jobs for your sons and daughters in the short space of 2 ½ years? What are you going to do with 8 million people coming into the labor market in the rest of this decade who haven't graduated from high school? How are they going to find work? Fifty years ago, 30 years ago, they might have worked on a farm, or could have done heavy labor. But today what is needed are skills and the uneducated man or woman is left behind. It is as inevitable as nature.

These are the problems which face the great democracy of ours. They cannot be solved by turning away, but can be solved, I believe, by the united intelligent effort of us all. And what is true of people is true of animals. We have only about half as many cows as we had 30 years ago, and they are producing about 25 percent more milk. What is going to happen to all of the people who once did all of the jobs which are no longer needed? By wise national policy, involving monetary and fiscal policy, I believe that we can stimulate this economy of ours to absorb these people. And also we should make life in this country so beautiful that, as the hours of work lessen, and they are now 40 hours and some day there will be less, people will have some place to go and some place to find close to nature to enrich their lives.

So what I am saying now, in a sense, is that we are the heirs of Theodore Roosevelt, and what we must do today is prepare for those who are our heirs. The steps we take in conservation and reclamation will have very little effect upon all of us here immediately and in this decade. What we are doing in the real sense is preparing for those who come after us.

We are gradually narrowing the differences between the standards of living of our city and our rural populations. Parity of farm income is important. But beyond that, we are gradually, too slowly but gradually, achieving a parity between urban and rural people in other aspects of life, in their ability to obtain electrical service, in their power and resources available for economic development, in their facilities and opportunities for recreation. We are seeking, in short, a true parity of opportunity for all of our people, north and south, east and west. It will not come overnight, but the example of what has been done to light the farms of this state in 30 years shows what can be done when the government and the people, working closely together, work for the common interest.

When I think what REA has done for this state and all of the fight against it when it was first put into effect, isn't it astonishing to you that this country, after the end of World War I, in many ways, a much more virgin country, passed through a recession in 1921, 1922, and 1923, a depression, in fact, and a panic, passed through a period of low farm income and depression on the farm through the rest of the twenties, and then moved through a depression of such staggering dimensions that it existed from 1929 to the outbreak of World War II, and yet from 1945, while we have moved through periods of recession, we have almost tripled our wealth in the short space of 18 years. And we have not passed through a period in any way comparable to the early twenties, or the desperate days of the thirties. And a lot of that is because the decisions which the Government and the people made in the thirties, which makes it possible for us, moving on that base, to determine wise policies in the sixties.

There is an old saying that things don't happen, they are made to happen. And we in our years have to make the same wise judgments about what policies will ensure us a growing prosperity as were made in the years before. The whole experience between two world wars, which was so tragic for this country, should tell us we cannot leave it to mere chance and accident. It requires the long range judgment of all of us, the public judgment, not only the pursuit of our private interests but the public judgment of what it takes to keep 180 million people gradually rising. And anyone who thinks it can be done by accident and chance should look back in history of 1919 to 1939 to know what can happen when we let natural forces operate completely freely.

Five billion dollars were advanced under REA to 1,000 borrowers. More than 1,500,000 miles of power lines have been built serving 20 million American people. This has been a sound investment. Out of roughly 1,000 borrowers, co-ops, only one is delinquent in payment, and the total losses on the $5 billion advanced is less than $50,000. Here in North Dakota, REA-financed rural co-ops serve on the average, barely more than one electric meter per mile of line, compared to an average in urban based utility systems of 33 meters to each mile of line.

There are the things which can make the great difference. What I urge upon those of you who are students here is to make determinations based on life as it is, on facts as they are, not merely here in this community, not merely in North Dakota, not merely in the United States, but in this dangerous and varied world of hours in which we play such a leading and responsible part. Unless the United States can demonstrate a sound and vigorous democratic life, a society which is not torn apart by friction and faction, an economy which is steadily growing- unless it can do all those things we cannot continue to bear the responsibilities of leadership which I think almost alone have prevented this world of ours from being overrun. The fact of the matter is that there are many things happening in the world which should serve to encourage us, as well as discourage us.

If 5 or 6 years ago anyone had ever visualized what has happened behind the Iron Curtain and the Bamboo Curtain they would have been regarded as completely unrealistic. All of the pressures which have been brought to bear on life in the Communist world have been brought to bear in part not only because of the inner contradictions of the Communist system itself, but also because the United States chose in 1945 to assume the burdens of maintaining a watch at the gate of freedom when so many other countries who so long had carried a heavy responsibility around the world were prostrate and defeated. So this country has done a good deal.

I come here today to say it can do a good deal more. And I urge those of you who are students here to recognize the obligation which any educated man or woman must bear to society as a whole. This school was not developed merely to give its graduates an economic advantage in the life struggle. We do not seek merely, I am sure, at this school to graduate lawyers, or farmers, or doctors who may lead their communities in income. What we seek to advance, what we seek to develop in all of our colleges and universities, are educated men and women who can bear the burdens of responsible citizenship, who can make judgments about life as it is, and as it must be, and encourage the people to make those decisions which can bring not only prosperity and security, but happiness to the people of the United States and those who depend upon it.

So in that great effort, I urge you to participate. Nothing will give you more satisfaction. No need is greater. And I hope that all of us, not only in our field of immediate interest, but in the field of our resources, will also make the necessary and immediate decisions.

Marshal Lyautey, who was the great French Marshal in North Africa, was once talking to his gardener and he suggested that he plant a tree, and the gardener said, "Well why plant it? It won't flower for 100 years." And Marshal Lyautey said, "In that case, plant it this afternoon."

I think this is good advice for all of us.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke in the University field house at Grand Forks after receiving an honorary degree of doctor of laws. In his opening words he referred to the University's President, Dr. George W. Starcher; governor William L. Guy and U.S. Senator Quentin N. Burdick of North Dakota; Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall; and U.S. Senators Mike Mansfield and Lee Metcalf of Montana.

Chapter 2

Presentation of Robert Kelley, President of the University of North Dakota, at the Eternal Flame Memorial Ceremony, JFK Conference, September 23, 2008 [1]

On November 22nd in 1963, I was leaving my college cafeteria when a friend approached me and breathlessly told me that President Kennedy had just been shot just down the road from where I was in Dallas. I did not learn until later that evening the details of that moment and that the country had lost its President and young leader to an assassin's bullet. As all Americans of that generation, I have never forgotten it. Through the remainder of my student years at the University California at Berkeley, and through the remainder of the decade of the 60's, I felt acutely the loss of JFK and his leadership.

Some few weeks before his death, President John Fitzgerald Kennedy visited the University of North Dakota and the city of Grand Forks. The visit was part of a five day tour of the United States addressing a variety of domestic projects, managing the nation's natural resources, among these projects was the Garrison Dam on the Missouri River, which created Lake Sakakawea. During his address to the campus he remembered Teddy Roosevelt and his love for North Dakota. In his speech, JFK looked ahead to the year 2000, when he estimated that some 350 million people would rely on the country's natural resources.

Kennedy said at that time, quote, "Unless we make the proper decisions today on how we shall use our water, and our air, and our land, and our oceans, unless we make the comparable effort, an effort comparable to what Theodore Roosevelt and others made 50 years ago, we are going to waste it." Kennedy concluded his address that morning with the following thought: I urge those of you who are students here to recognize the obligation which any educated man or woman must bear to society as a whole. This school was not developed merely to give its graduates an economic advantage in the life struggle. We do not seek merely, I'm sure, at this school, to graduate lawyers, farmers, doctors, who may lead their communities in income. What we seek to advance, what we seek to develop in all of our colleges and universities are educated men and women who can bear the burdens of responsible scholarship, and citizenship, who can make judgments about life as it is, and as it must be, and encourage the people to make those decisions which could bring not only prosperity and security, but happiness to the people of the United States and those who depend upon it."

These words were true in 1963 and they are true in 2008. It's an honor to remember the life and contributions of John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

1. The presentation by Dr. Kelley was recorded by Sean Windingland, and along with many of the other presentations at the JFK Conference, placed on Youtube. Using the recording preserved by Windingland on Youtube, John Delane Williams transcribed Dr. Kelley's presentation.

Chapter 3

"I Was the Chief of Staff for Ideas." A Conversation with Ted Sorensen

Theodore Sorensen and Gregory S.Gordon

Theodore Sorensen, speech-writer and senior policy adviser to JFK from his days in the Senate to his service in the Oval Office, sat down with Gregory Gordon, Assistant Professor of Law, for an unusually candid and informative conversation. Dr. Robert Kelley, President of the University of North Dakota, provided the introduction. Here is what each had to say:

President Kelley: Theodore Sorensen was born in Lincoln, Nebraska, went to the University of Nebraska and attended law school at the University of Nebraska. After law school, he went to Washington D.C. where he would ultimately work with JFK. This experience would grow not only into a partnership with the President, but also into a friendship that would last until the President's death in 1963. Ted met with JFK on a daily basis as the President's speech writer and special counsel. As a result of this relationship, Ted Sorensen is a prominent figure in the history of our country. He composed JFK's soaring rhetoric and exerted great influence on his policies. We see Ted's influence present at great moments in American history, moments which included the face-down with the Soviets over the Berlin Wall, the Cuban missile crisis, the civil rights marches on Washington, domestic energy policies, conservation of natural resources, and with our US policy in Asia and the founding of the Peace Corps. Leaving the White House following JFK's assassination, Ted joined a New York City law firm where he has been engaged in international law, advising governments, multi-national organizations and major corporations around the world. He is the author of a best-selling biography on JFK and remains active in political and international issues. I'll digress from my prepared comments for just a moment and say that after dinner with Ted I know him to be a man of humor, great warmth, and an abiding affection for everyone who comes into contact with him. Ted - it is a wonderful pleasure to have met you. Ted lives in New York City with his wife Gillian. I found out at dinner that she is also an assistant for Kofi Anan. She too has a very distinguished background. Hosting Ted Sorensen this evening will be Professor Gregory Gordon, Assistant Professor in our School of Law. Greg is the Director of the Center for Human Rights and Genocide Studies and teaches in the areas of criminal procedure, international law, and international human rights law. Prior to joining the faculty of law at the UND, Greg was Senior Trial Attorney in the Office of Special Investigations in the U.S. Department of Justice, Criminal Division. He also has served as Assistant U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia and worked as Legal Officer and Deputy Team Leader on the International Criminal Tribunal for

Rwanda in Kigali. Please join me in welcoming Mr. Ted Sorensen and Professor Greg Gordon to this great conversation.

GG: Thank you Dr. Kelley for that warm and generous introduction. Good evening Mr. Sorensen and thank you for being with us tonight. This is a unique and fascinating opportunity for us to hear the thoughts and recollections of President Kennedy's closing living adviser. I'm going to ask some questions and then we are going to open it up to the audience to ask you some questions. I know you have an excerpt from your recent book, *Counselor: A Life at the Edge of History*, which came out, I believe, in May. We have a copy of it here with us and we will finish with you reading a selection from your book. Let me start with the beginning of your relationship with JFK. I think we would all like to know how you originally met President Kennedy and what were your first impressions of him?

TS: After law school I went to Washington because I thought I might find the kind of legal work there - public policy, national, international matters - that I probably would not find in my home city of Lincoln, Nebraska. After two early jobs, one for a federal agency, one for a temporary congressional committee, and that temporary committee expired, I had to start looking for a job all over again because in 1952 President Eisenhower had been elected - the first Republican in 20 years - he requested a freeze on the executive branch employment so I could not return to my old job. The chairman of that committee I was serving said "Don't worry. There are some new Senators. Some of them come from the House and I've worked with them. I'll recommend to them that they take a look at your availability." He and his chief of staff sent letters to three new Senators who had formerly worked with Senator Douglas of Illinois, the Chairman. Of those three, one was Mike Mansfield from nearby Montana. One was Scoop Jackson, or Henry Jackson, of Washington, also of the Northwest. And the other was John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts. I don't think to my knowledge that I ever heard back from Mansfield, but both Jackson and Kennedy said, yes, they would be glad to interview me. I had interviews with both. In Kennedy's case he had been a Congressman and he had invited me to meet with him in his old House office building but the newly elected Congressman assigned to that office was moving in that same day. All was chaos and confusion inside. So he took two chairs and placed them in the doorway. We perched on those chairs and had about a five minute interview. There wasn't time for a serious investigation of my credentials, but I was impressed. Impressed, first of all, that he did not try to impress me. Here he was a millionaire, a war hero, a Harvard graduate. He had everything. And he was a newly elected member of the Senate. He didn't try to talk about that or impress me about how important he was. He didn't act in a pompous, self-important way as so many politicians do. He was just a good guy. I liked that. As it turned out, for the next 11 years he was a good guy.

GG: He took you all the way ultimately to the White House. When you went to the White House with JFK you described your role there as Special Counsel to the President and you indicated in your book that your role encompassed advising the

President on policy and serving as a speech writer. I was wondering, what was the relationship between speech writing and policy making when it came to domestic affairs?

TS: In a way, I had been doing that during his eight years as United States Senator. In the White House it was even easier, except I had a lot more to do. But I was a policy adviser and I would take part in the meetings on domestic policy where decisions were made. It was easy to watch the President make a decision. I could see what evidence impressed him. I could see what arguments meant the most to him. I could see what his responses were and then walk a few steps down to my office, not far from his, and put all that into a draft speech. Other presidents have had speech writing departments and the departments are usually not even in the White House. They are in the Old Executive Office Building across the street. They have seven or nine word-smiths sitting there, waiting for the phone to ring. The chief of staff calls up and says the President would like a speech on Haiti. Who knows about Haiti? Who will write a speech for the President on Haiti? And someone will say, I will, and that someone might never have met or seen the President, much less have the slightest idea what his position is on Haiti. I couldn't do that and I certainly wouldn't enjoy it compared to the relationship I had with John Kennedy.

GG: You knew the President's thoughts, probably, as well as anyone.

TS. Yes. When I went into the White House I had been with him for eight years.

GG: One last question related to this. Were there some times when there was an inconsistency between writing and policy making?

TS: No.

GG: That must have made the job easier.

TS: Well, I think I say in the book, being very immodest, but comparing myself with others and I have known many presidential speech writers, they have to submit their draft to the head of the communications department. I was the head of the communications department. Then they had to submit it to the chief of staff for ideas. I was the chief of staff for ideas. I only had to submit my draft to one person, John F. Kennedy.

GG: And you had two assistants, as I recall, when you were in the White House.

TS: I had two deputies. It was called the Office of Special Counsel. They were actually lawyers, practicing law while I was working on policy matters, and for the most part they did not get involved with speech writing. Of course, John F. Kennedy did. Once in a while we drew on the wonderful historian Arthur Schlesinger who was gifted. During the first years, Richard Goodwin, who had worked with me during the campaign,

was in the White House and assisted me. But he then transferred over to the State Department and then the Peace Corps. So, basically, my two assistants worked on appeals from independent boards and agencies and those sort of legal questions. Much as I tried to get rid of the speech writing job, the President kept piling more and more responsibilities on me, but he wouldn't let me give it up.

GG: As a result, you have this incredible opportunity to work with the President on a daily basis and to know what he was thinking and as well to be his adviser and special counsel. During this time with President Kennedy in the White House what actions that you took or decisions that you made do you believe have had the greatest impact on the course of history?

TS: I didn't make decisions. If you're a speech writer you always have to keep in mind that you're just a speech writer. You're not the president. You don't make decisions. You don't decide policy. The President does that. I had a background in civil rights that he did not, and perhaps my advice on that policy and the speeches I drafted regarding that policy helped to influence him as his brother Bobby, the Attorney General, was also influencing him. But influencing him even more was what was going on in our country - civil rights became a burning issue, north, south, east, west, it became a moral issue. It became a legal issue. It was an issue that the President of the United States could not ignore. So I don't even take the credit for pushing him over that line. Events pushed him over that line.

GG: The book points out that you were active early in your life with civil rights. It is something that you believed in deeply and cared about. When you started at the White House, I get the impression from your book that civil rights was not at the top of the agenda at the very beginning of the administration.

TS: No. It was not for two reasons. One, it had not been one of Kennedy's chief interests. He was more focused on foreign policy and to some extent making certain that the economy remained strong because he had not had an exposure to civil rights issues, although he began talking about it in his campaign. When he got to the White House the congressional leaders said that 20, or was it 23, Democratic Congressmen had lost their seats in 1960. It may have been Kennedy's fault because his religion turned a lot of people against the Democratic Party. And they said in the previous session of Congress there had been attempts to have a civil rights bill and it failed. If it failed in the previous Congress it certainly wasn't going to pass with 23 fewer House Democrats and for Kennedy to go through the motions of symbolically sending up a civil rights bill would only antagonize the so-called 'Dixiecrats', those southern Democrats, to vote against the rest of his program. Well, the rest of his program, that he wanted passed that first year included a lot of provisions to help people at the bottom of the economic ladder, including blacks. Minimal wage, better public housing programs, aid for economically distressed areas, and why jeopardize the prospects of that legislation which would actually help black Americans just to go through the political symbolism of sending up

legislation that had no chance of passing.

GG: It must have been gratifying, as time progressed, when you got to the point when it was politically viable to work on civil rights legislation directly.

TS: Truth of the matter is it was never politically viable because JFK knew that it was going to cost the Democratic Party the South and Lyndon Johnson particularly weighed in with that point. It turns out that they were right. The Democratic Party has lost something like seven out of ten presidential elections since Kennedy and Johnson. The only three exceptions were Southern governors - Carter and Clinton - and it is because we have lost all the southern border states in almost all of those elections.

GG: Can we say then that the civil rights legislation that you worked on and that was ultimately passed during the Johnson administration was a great act of courage?

TS: Yes, of course it was because Kennedy knew that it was. I still think, and both he and I hoped, that he would still win the reelection to the second term because he gained enormous popularity in all other parts of the country. And surely some southern states would recognize his leadership ability and the New Deal economic programs that had done so much to revitalize the South back in the 30s. But yes, he knew it would endanger the prospects of his party.

GG: If the book, *Profiles in Courage*, were updated that that would seem to be a chapter. I was thinking about the decision making in the White House, especially early on. People have heard about the Bay of Pigs and I know that President Kennedy felt that that was not an operation that went well, that he did not feel good about it. What changed in the White House after the Bay of Pigs in terms of the way operations were conducted?

TS: It is a very important question. Since Roosevelt, people get this idea that the real time for showing what you can do with the new president while the so-called honey-moon was on, the real time was the first 100 days. Roosevelt talked about the first 100 days. In his inaugural Kennedy said that all this *will not* be done in the first hundred days. But there was the Bay of Pigs, an operation that had been formulated by holdover CIA and military leaders who had a lot of credentials, the grey hair and the medals. So, he believed them. He believed them when we were definitely going to overthrow Castro; that is once the Cuban exile army landed on the beaches of the Bay of Pigs the Cuban people would rise up and throw out Castro. That was not very likely because the Cubans who were against Castro were all in Miami or Cuban prisons. So that was one of many false premises which they sold to Kennedy and he kicked himself afterwards for having believed them. But two good things came out of that disaster. One was that he didn't make it worse. They wanted him, when the invasion failed, to go back and dig the hole deeper by sending US airplanes over to bomb Cuba and Kennedy was smart enough to realize that when you are in a hole the first thing to do is to stop digging. Second, he learned lessons so that a year and a half later when we had another crisis in Cuba, the

Cuban missile crisis, the people were different, the procedures for making decisions were completely different. He wanted to know the pros and cons of each one. The policy was different because he had decided that, as I said to some students at lunch today, you don't solve political problems - whenever Americans talk rather dismissively about other countries and the need for 'regime change' that's a political problem and you don't solve political problems with military force. So the whole approach to the Cuban missile crisis was completely different, thank goodness, otherwise we wouldn't be here talking, and it was completely different in the results.

GG: Obviously, he had people connected to the Cuban missile crisis that he had confidence in and whom he could trust.

TS: Yes, on the first day, the first day I can remember very clearly and it was the only time in my life when I can remember what day of the week it was that something happened. On Tuesday morning, October 16th, he called me in and told me what the reconnaissance planes, the U2s over Cuba, had photographed from 50,000 feet up. It was the beginning of the Soviet nuclear missile site and he was calling a meeting for later that morning, not for two months later after he had gone back to the ranch to clear brush, a meeting for later that morning. Not the National Security Council but those individuals in government whose judgment he wanted and whose recommendations he trusted - a dozen of us or so. The National Security Council has a membership set by statute and there were some members of the National Security Council whose recommendation he wasn't interested in, and in addition to that everyone who thinks he is important in Washington has to attend the National Security Council meeting and to show his importance he has to bring along his deputy. And for the deputy to prove his importance he has to bring along an assistant. And pretty soon the meeting is too big to a.) make the kind of crisp recommendation that Kennedy liked and b.) to keep a secret. Kennedy felt that we had a brief advantage because the Russians did not know that we knew. Therefore, if we could keep it secret we would have time to work out our response without some pre-emptive action by them making public that they had the missiles there, panicking the American people or inducing Congress to pressure the President into doing something he did not think was very wise.

GG: He was being very calm during this incredible era.

TS: He was calm. He was detached. He still had a sense of humor. The cool way he led that group through our deliberations, day and night, was extraordinary.

GG: What was your specific role in that group?

TS: If you have seen the movie *13 Days* which is a pretty good, accurate movie. Of course, my wife said that it was too bad that Warren Beatty wasn't available to play me. If you see that it is clear that the director of the movie decided that my role was to worry. Every time the camera turned on the poor guy picked to play me he had his hand

on his chin and his brow furrowed. He was worried. But I had to do more than worry. I was the NSO, a hold-over from the speech writing. I still had to put some words on paper. One came early in our deliberations when the idea - everybody's first idea was to surgical air strike, send bombers to bomb and knock the missile site out. Bobby Kennedy, who had a moral core, said yes and then we'll kill a lot of innocent Cuban civilians working at the site. We got to notify people that we're going to drop bombs.

GG: Didn't he make an analogy to Pearl Harbor?

TS: He said that's Pearl Harbor in reverse. The Air Force was not too happy about notifying the target. I was asked to draft a note from Kennedy to Khrushchev to be delivered by a secret, high-level emissary. Once I had the assignment everyone began to weigh in on their conditions they sought. They said don't make it an ultimatum. Super-powers don't respond to an ultimatum. Don't make it complicated. Khrushchev will just negotiate the complicated provisions for months while he finishes the missile site. And don't make it too one-sided or history, posterity, will blame us for mankind's final war. I went back to my office and tried drafting a message that would meet all those conditions. I finally came back and reported it was impossible. Of course it was going to sound like an ultimatum - it was an ultimatum. So that was one specific role I had besides worrying. Finally, after there was a consensus in favor of the quarantine or blockade, and I was in the group that favored that option, we called the President back from Chicago. As I mentioned in the news conference earlier today, the President felt that all of us should keep to our commitments and regular schedules, not to let people guess that there was some emergency that was causing everyone to stay in the White House. So he, the next day, Wednesday, the 17th, that's why I can't believe that anyone is talking about canceling or postponing the [Presidential candidates'] debate now because of the crisis. The President didn't cancel the election and he didn't even cancel his own campaign schedule. He went to Connecticut to make a speech the next day while the rest of us who were meeting came back and the meetings resumed. On Friday, he went to the mid-West and Chicago. On Friday evening or Saturday morning, Bobby, the Attorney General, his brother, called him and said we have reached a consensus. Please come back. When he landed I handed him a one page memorandum which I think is in the book and which summed up my views -- what I thought was the irrefutable case for the quarantine options and the irrefutable case against the surgical bombing followed by an invasion option. Then, after the President selected the quarantine option he wanted to deliver a speech on the evening of Monday, October 22nd. He had only learned about it October 16th. We had completed our work and had a response ready to announce six days later on October 22nd. That was the speech in which he told the American people what we had discovered and what we were determined to do about it. I have been asked about this all over the country over the last few years and for some time. Men about your age, Greg, come up to me afterwards and thank me for making the President's speech to the country that night so scary they were able to convince their girlfriends that it was the last night on earth.

GG: That must have been the ultimate date movie....

TS: We continued to be in session. There were high points and low points. Finally, on Friday night, October 26th, a letter came in from Khrushchev through a secret back channel that I tell about in the book also. I was involved a little bit in that secret back channel. That letter from Khrushchev, even though it was full of threats and denials, also had buried within it at least the seed of a possible peaceful resolution of the crisis. On Saturday the 27th the Ex-Com as it was called, the Executive Committee of the National Security Council, the name was just made up, there was no such thing, met to decide what to do about that letter. The day was full of bad news. Another letter came in, this one not from Khrushchev personally - it sounded like it was written by the Soviet military presidium - it was stiff in tone and it said they were not going to do anything unless Kennedy took NATO missiles out of Turkey. We can't do that in a hurry by ourselves. Then we got a briefing from the CIA that the over-flight planes have shown that the missile sites were just about completed and ready to fire. We were meeting in the Cabinet Room. Today, I am told, the Cabinet Room has become a reinforced concrete bunker, safe from outside bombardment. It wasn't then. We knew if we took the wrong course that would be our last day. Other bad news. One of the U2 planes over Cuba had been shot down; the only fatality of the entire crisis. The low flying reconnaissance planes that I never fully liked because they were easy targets were fired upon by Cubans. The shooting down of the U2 plane could only have been done by a Soviet surface to air missile. The military insisted that because we needed that high flying reconnaissance to give us eyes on what was going on that we would have to retaliate and bomb that surface to air missile. Kennedy said there will be time enough to decide that. Let's wait. Let's wait to see how this correspondence turns out. Then, I think you mentioned this, then in the middle of all this tension, on the edge of war, a note comes in from the Pentagon that an Air Force plane - I think it was a fighter plane - based in Alaska had been sent out to sample the air, to see if the Soviets have been testing their nuclear weapons in preparation for war. Truth of the matter is that we were testing our nuclear weapons. This fighter plane had navigational controls which malfunctioned and he flew - how do you lose your way when with the North Pole there is only one way to go and that's south - he flew out over Siberia, over Russian territory when both sides are on the edge of war! The Soviets understandably thought that this is the beginning of World War III and scrambled their jets. That was the message that came in and it was received in stony silence broken by JFK saying well there is always one son-of-a-bitch who doesn't get the message. So then we were to decide about the two different letters. Again, we sat around the table arguing. Tommy Thompson was the wisest among us, a career foreign service officer who had been Ambassador to Moscow. He even knew Khrushchev personally. He said ignore the second letter. Answer the first letter. Bobby Kennedy and I said yes, that's what we should do. I pointed out that there were some parts in that first letter that could receive a constructive response. Finally, the President said all right. You two draft a reply. So that is a long answer to your question about what role I had. It was more than speech writer.

GG: That is an incredible story and I am glad that we got to hear it. It shows, I think, what a great role JFK played in being calm and being a good leader during this

incredible crisis. Historian Thomas Carlyle believed in the 'great man' theory of history and that is primarily single individuals and their personal decisions more than other forces that shape history. Did JFK's tenure in the White House lend support to Carlyle's theory?

TS: Yes, it did, particularly in the Cuban missile crisis because we found out afterwards that had we bombed and invaded as the Joint Chiefs and later on the Congressional leaders were urging, there were increased Soviet troops on the island equipped with tactical nuclear weapons and the authority to use them on their own initiative in the event of an American attack. Had they used nuclear weapons, even tactical nuclear weapons, against American forces, no doubt we would have responded with tactical nuclear weapons. No doubt they would have responded with perhaps strategic nuclear weapons and we would have gone up that same nuclear escalator until both sides had devastated each other. Maybe totally eliminated from the earth each other's country and then radioactive fallout from nuclear explosions could be carried by wind and water to the far reaches of the earth until the planet is what scientists call a nuclear desert.

GG: I have to fast-forward and come to 2008. I am curious to know what you see in common between the presidential election this year and in 1960.

TS: There are many similarities between the presidential election this year and in 1960. President Kennedy, or Senator Kennedy, they said there is a young, relatively new United States Senator running in 1960 and there is a relatively young new United States Senator running in 2008. They said that Kennedy was too young and inexperienced. He said experience, that is like the tail lights on a boat that show you where you've been and not where you are going. Kennedy was given no chance of winning because of his demographic obstacle - his religion. The country had never elected a Catholic president. Obama is told that he can't win because of his demographic obstacle - the country has never elected a president whose skin is black. Religion, it seems to me was more relevant to what people think about and how they decide the presidency thank skin color. Yet, if we are in a contest of nerves it is true that Kennedy was under 44 years old and the country had never elected a president under 44 years old. Neither had they elected a president who was running for his first term over 70 years old. That, I think, may have more effect on a man's performance in the White House than being too young. Being too young was an advantage for Kennedy. He had the energy to stay up all night with Bobby, me and a couple of others the night the University of Mississippi was integrated by the admission of James Meredith who encountered a violent mob. He had the energy to work day and night during those 13 days that I just mentioned. He also appealed to the emerging young leaders of the world, and in Africa in particular but also in Latin American nations there were young leaders rising to the fore. They identified with Kennedy. In my international law practice I had the opportunity to meet many of them. They told me how on election night in 1960 they stayed by their radios until the wee hours of the morning to find out if their candidate, Kennedy, had won. This year I have

received a letter just before I came out here from one of Asia's most distinguished statesman whom I met when he was at the United Nations. He said to me the day Obama walks into the White House the opinion of the world for the United States will rise dramatically. So there are many, many similarities. Kennedy appealed to the young and Obama is bringing them back. For many years young people had been disillusioned, with good reason, with American politics and presidents. They've become cynical about it all, but Kennedy brought them into politics and government. Obama is doing the same thing. Kennedy had perspective on American foreign policy because of the years as an Ambassador's son he had lived abroad. Obama has also lived abroad as a young man. So the number of parallels is remarkable. It's a little more negative, even dirty campaigning, which I don't like this year. Kennedy had the ability to laugh it off. In the book I quote one of my favorite lines in which he said "Mr. Nixon in the last ten days has called me a radical, a spendthrift, a pied piper, this, this and this, and all I've done in return is call him a true Republican and he says that's really getting low."

GG: You have now spoken about a lot of the similarities between JFK and Obama, but aside from race and the fact that President Kennedy had a privileged upbringing, what do you see as the difference between the two?

TS: Kennedy was a war-hero. He had learned first-hand about the horrors of war and that was one of the reasons that, like Obama, he was determined to never start another war. Obama came to that conclusion on the basis of his principles and his religious beliefs. He is a Christian, by the way, and not a Muslim. That's important. Kennedy said in his American University commencement speech the world knows that America will never start a war; this generation of Americans has seen enough of war. So, our last two presidents did not serve. Obama has not served in the military but he has, never-the-less, a commitment against war as he demonstrated in opposing the war in Iraq before it started. Also, both of them went to Harvard.

GG: In the interest of balance, John McCain, apart from the military career, what similarities do you see between John McCain and JFK?

TS: John McCain is a conservative Republican who has views, particularly on domestic policy, completely at the opposite end of the spectrum from Kennedy's views on the economy, on social justice, on women's rights. John McCain, unfortunately, drew different conclusions from his war service than Kennedy did from his. John McCain seems to favor the Bush policy of perpetual war against one country after another. Kennedy, as I said, was totally opposed to war so I don't see any similarities between those two. Also, as I said, Kennedy was the youngest man at that time to be elected president and if McCain were elected he would be the oldest man to be elected president. They are quite different.

GG: Assuming that he were alive and in office now do you think that JFK would be as effective in today's much changed political landscape versus what it was in the

early 1960s?

TS: I think so. He would be effective in any political landscape. He was completely relaxed, whether on television or on the public platform. He had this wonderful sense of humor. He was unbelievably good looking. He simply had a personality and a manner of speaking that enabled him to build bridges to just about any audience, north, south, east, and west, rich or poor. He was a terrific campaigner and I believe he would have been reelected to a second term.

GG: I wonder if he would have wanted to be in politics today given the way that media scrutiny has gotten so intense since the early 1960s. Do you think that he might have thought that being in politics would have been too much of a burden given today how much politicians are under the microscope?

TS: There's a lot of speculation about that. He was a man who conducted himself in a way...I have a chapter in the book about his personal life which I have never written or talked about before. I say that he was sufficiently careful and discreet in his selection of both companions and places. He didn't use the oval office. I don't think there was that much difference. After all, he was set upon leading this country away from the Eisenhower-Dulles foreign policy based on what was called massive retaliation because he thought it was a danger to our country. Even though he suffered from a very bad back and it was sometimes painful for him to climb up those steps to the airplane and to climb down later to stand on truck beds making speeches endlessly, shaking all those hands until his own hand became blistered and raw. He was a rich man. He didn't need that job. He could have been taking in the breeze on the beach at Hyannis Port. I don't think that other burdens that you referred to would have prevented him from trying to save his country no matter what. Just as, I might add, Obama could have been a partner in a big Chicago law firm instead of out there, day and night. I'm sure he's hurting his back and hand too because there is nothing more exhausting than running for President of the United States. And that is even more so for the staff than the presidential candidate. He gets to go to bed at night while the staff stay up and work all night. I salute Obama as I saluted Kennedy for being willing to seek the presidency because a lot easier, more comfortable choices were open for the both of them.

GG: Thank you very much.