

*John Fitzgerald Kennedy*



*The Presidential Years* — 1960-1963.  
Original Speeches



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## John Fitzgerald Kennedy

The incredible, devastating news that engulfed all America and the world yesterday afternoon is still difficult of comprehension. Hours after the event it remains almost inconceivable that John Fitzgerald Kennedy, President of the United States, whose every word and action typified life and youth and strength, now lies dead of an assassin's bullet.

All of us—from the country's highest leaders to the humblest citizen—all of us are still in a state of shock from this stunning blow, that even now seems unreal in its grotesque horror. And hundreds of millions of people beyond our borders—throughout the hemisphere and across the seas—mourn, too, the loss of a President who gave worldwide reality to the American ideals of peace and freedom.

One's first thought turns in human sympathy to the President's family, to his wife who was by his side when he was struck down, to his little children, to his parents, to his brothers and sisters. The acutely personal loss they have suffered is intensified by the unusual closeness of their relationships within this tight-knit family.

The personal loss is deep and crushing; the loss to the nation and the world is historic and overpowering. John F. Kennedy was a man of intellect as well as action. He represented the vitality and the energy, the intelligence and the enthusiasm, the courage and the hope of these United States in the middle of this 20th century. On that day less than three years ago when he took the oath of his great office, he said:

"Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has

been passed to a new generation of Americans—born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage—and unwilling to witness or permit the slow undoing of those human rights to which this nation has always been committed, and to which we are committed today at home and around the world."

John F. Kennedy died in and for this belief, the belief in those human rights to which this nation has always been committed, and to which in his day it recommitted itself—rights which we hope to see exercised around the world, but which we are determined to see exercised within our borders.

No madman's bullet can stop this inexorable march of human rights; no murder, however tragic, can make it falter. In death as in life, the words and spirit of this our most newly martyred President will lead the nation ever closer toward fulfillment of the ideals of domestic brotherhood and international peace by which his Administration has been guided from the start.

Among the last words John F. Kennedy wrote were these: "In a world full of frustrations and irritations, America's leadership must be guided by the lights of learning and reason."

The light of reason was momentarily extinguished with the crack of a rifle shot in Dallas yesterday. But that light is, in reality, inextinguishable; and, with God's help, it will show the way to our country and our country's leaders as we mourn for John F. Kennedy in the darkening days ahead.

### In Memoriam

The leaden skies of yesterday were like a pall. A sense of grief seemed to hang in the air. Such a feeling was inevitable, for it was as though the very wind was keening in the woodlands, the trees themselves sensitive to human emotions. Late November is the year's own time of the long sleep, the summary if not the farewell. The hills are bare to the buffeting of winter.

And yet, the hills still stand. The trees are still rooted and rugged. Rivers flow to the sea. And beyond the gray clouds the sun keeps to its course and the stars are in their appointed places. The eternities prevail. We live with those eternities, though ourselves mortal; it is the human dream, the hope and aspiration, that persists. Take away all else and those are the human eternities.

Robert Frost, in his last book, wrote lines that sum it up:

*We vainly wrestle with the blind belief  
That aught we cherish  
Can ever quite pass out of utter grief  
And wholly perish.*

Dark days come, inevitable. And time persists, time that is both dark and light and forever changing. The time of the stars, the time of the hills, the time of man. And nothing cherished ever wholly perishes. Gray November is a passing thing, and year's end is no end at all, but another marker on the great rhythm. A tree falls, and a seedling is already rooted.

Man persists, man with the capacity to dream and hope and dream again. Man, with his capacity for shock and grief, but also with his inheritance of faith, of belief, is participation in the great truth of continuity.

JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY  
The

Excerpts

Side 1

Pre-election —  
Election Eve —  
Oath of Office —  
Inaugural — Jan. 20, 1961  
State of the Union —  
Peace Corps —  
U.N. Address —  
Berlin Wall —  
Nuclear Test —

Side 2

Alliance for Progress —  
On Cuba — Oct. 22, 1961  
On Labor — Sept. 12, 1961  
Birmingham Speech —  
U. S. Steel — Aug. 14, 1961  
Houston — Nov. 1, 1961  
Dallas — Nov. 22, 1963

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Dulles Air

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## J. Edgar Kennedy

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## A DOCUMENTARY

### JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY The Presidential Years (1960-1963)

#### Excerpts from Great Speeches

##### Side 1

**Pre-election** — November 6, 1960

**Election Eve** — November 8, 1960

**Oath of Office** — January 20, 1961

**Inaugural** — January 20, 1961

**State of the Union Message** — January 31, 1961

**Peace Corps** — March 2, 1962

**U.N. Address** — September 26, 1961

**Berlin Wall** — June 26, 1963

**Nuclear Test** — July 15, 1963

##### Side 2

**Alliance for Progress** — August 6, 1961

**On Cuba** — October 23, 1962

**On Labor** — September 3, 1962

**Birmingham Segregation** — May 13, 1963

**U. S. Steel** — April 12, 1962

**Houston** — November 21, 1963

**Dallas** — November 22, 1963

#### IN MEMORIAM

President Johnson's Tribute at  
Dulles Airport — November 22, 1963