

# The life and death of president john f. kennedy



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President Kennedy was born on May 29, 1917, in Brookline, Massachusetts, a suburb of Boston. The other eight Kennedy children were Joseph, Jr. Rosemary Kathleen Eunice Patricia Robert F. Jean Edward M. "Ted" .

As the Kennedy children grew up, their parents encouraged them to develop their own talents and interests. Loyalty to each other was important to the Kennedys. But the brothers and sisters also developed a strong competitive spirit. Jack, as his family called him, and Joe, his older brother, were especially strong rivals. Jack was quiet and often shy, but he held his own in fights with his older brother. The boys enjoyed playing touch football.

John Kennedy attended elementary schools in Brookline and Riverdale. In 1930, when he was 13 years old, his father sent him to the Canterbury School in New Milford, Conn. The next year, he transferred to Choate Academy in Wallingford, Conn. Kennedy was graduated from Choate in 1935 at the age of 18. His classmates voted him "most likely to succeed."

Kennedy wrote a thesis for his senior thesis at Harvard. The thesis was why Britain had not been ready for war. The book that resulted from this was titled *Why England Slept*. This book became a best-seller. Kennedy graduated cum laude in 1940. He then enrolled in the Stanford University graduate business school, but dropped out six months later. Kennedy enlisted as a seaman in the U. S. Navy after taking a trip through South America.

For a few months, Kennedy was stationed in Washington, D. C. He applied for sea duty following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Kennedy was assigned to a PT boat squadron late in 1942. After learning to command one of the smallcraft, he was commissioned as an ensign.

Shortly after midnight on August 2, 1943, a Japanese destroyer cut Kennedy's PTboat in two. His boat was assigned to patrol duty off the Soloman Islands in the SouthPacific. Two of the crew were killed and Kennedy and 10 other men clung all night to the wreckage of their boat. The next morning, Kennedy ordered his men to swim to a nearby island. Despite himself being injured (back), he spent five hours towing one of the disabled crewmen to shore. Over the period of the next four days, Kennedy was in the water searching for help. On the fifth day, he persuaded friendly natives on Cross Island to go for help. On August 7th, Kennedy's crew was rescued. For heroism and leadership, Kennedy received the Navy and Marine Corps Medal. He was also awarded the Purple Heart for being wounded in combat. In December 1943, the navy returned Lieutenant Kennedy to the United States.

His back was giving him pain and he was suffering from malaria. Kennedy spent the rest of his naval service as an instructor and in various military hospitals. He then had a short career as a newspaper reporter.

John's family thought that he would become a writer or a teacher. His brother Joe was going to be the family politician. Joe's death in 1944 changed his future. Later, as a U. S. Senator, Kennedy said: " Just as I went into politics because Joe died, if anything happens to me tomorrow, my brother Bobby would run for my seat in the Senate. And if Bobby died, Teddy would take over for him." Kennedy began his political career in 1946. He ran for the U. S. House of Representatives. He opposed nine others for nomination in the solidly Democratic 11th Congressional District of Massachusetts. He won the nomination and went on to easily defeat his Republican opponent.

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In 1946, Kennedy's brothers and sisters helped him win the nomination in which he was campaigning. His mother also helped him. The women organised teas in the homes of voters. But his father did not take an active part in Kennedy's political campaigns. His isolationism before World War II, his conservatism, and his wealth made him a controversial figure.

In January 1947, Kennedy took his seat in Congress. Later that year, he became seriously ill, and doctors discovered that he was suffering from a malfunction of the adrenal glands. To control the ailment, he had to take medicine daily for the rest of his life.

In Congress, Kennedy voted for most of the social welfare programs of President Harry S. Truman. He was re-elected to the House in 1948 and also 1950.

In April 1952, Kennedy announced that he would oppose Republican Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. Lodge, a popular and experienced legislator, seemed certain to win re-election.

Kennedy's brothers and sisters, their wives and husbands, and his mother joined him in the campaign. Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Republican presidential candidate, carried Massachusetts in the 1952 election. But Kennedy upset Lodge by 70,637 votes.

In 1951, Kennedy met his future wife at a dinner party in Washington, D. C.

Jacqueline Lee Bouvier was the daughter of a wealthy Wall Street broker, John V.

Bouvier III. She had attended Vassar College and the Sorbonne in Paris.

When she met Kennedy, she was a student at George Washington University in Washington. Later, she worked as an inquiring photographer for the Washington Times-Herald. She and Kennedy were married on September 12, 1953. A daughter was still-born on August 23, 1956, and was unnamed. Their daughter Caroline was born November 27, 1957. Their son John F.

Jr., was born on November 25, 1960. Another son, Patrick Bouvier, was born prematurely August 7th, 1963. He died August 9, 1963. Five years after Kennedy's death, Mrs. Kennedy married Aristotle Onassis, a Greek millionaire. Senator Kennedy concentrated at first on helping Massachusetts and New England. He sponsored bills to help local industries, such as fishing, textile manufacturing, and watchmaking. Kennedy served on the Senate Labor Committee, and the Government Operations Committee, chaired by Senator Joseph R. McCarthy of Wisconsin.

Robert Kennedy, his brother, served for a time on the Government Operations Committee staff as an assistant counsel.

At the time, McCarthy was the most controversial figure in American politics.

Many people praised him for his attacks on communist influence in government. Others criticized McCarthy because they felt he had violated the civil liberties of persons investigated by his committee. Kennedy felt that McCarthy often abused his power and was endangering the honor of the Senate. Kennedy was ill when the Senate condemned McCarthy in 1954. But he said later that if he had been present, he would have voted for the condemnation. During his first Senate term, Kennedy's back caused him

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severe pain. In October 1954, and in February, 1955, he underwent operations to correct the injury. While recovering, Kennedy wrote a book about some of the brave deeds performed by U. S.

Senators. For the book, *Profiles in Courage*, Kennedy was awarded the Pulitzer prize for biography in 1957.

In 1957, Kennedy was appointed to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, a key assignment in Congress. He criticized the foreign policy of the Republican administration, and supported a program of increased aid to underdeveloped countries.

Kennedy also worked for moderate legislation to end alleged corruption in labor unions. He was a member of a Senate committee investigating racketeering in labor-management relations. Kennedy's brother Robert was counsel for the committee.

The Kennedys and other committee members engaged in dramatic arguments with controversial labor leaders, including James R. Hoffa, of the Teamsters union.

In June 1956, a movement to nominate Kennedy for Vice-President had gained strength among Democratic leaders. At the party's national convention in Chicago, Kennedy made the presidential nominating speech for former Governor Adlai E.

Stevenson of Illinois. The delegates chose Stevenson to oppose Eisenhower for the second time. Kennedy worked furiously for the vice-presidential

nomination. But he lost to Senator Estes Kefauver of Tennessee after a nip-and-tuck battle.

Kennedy began working for the 1960 presidential nomination right after the 1956 convention. He spent nearly every weekend campaigning. In 1958, Kennedy won re-election to the Senate by a majority of 874,608 votes.

Many Democratic leaders thought Kennedy had several disadvantages as a presidential candidate. His main drawback was his religion. Alfred E. Smith, the only Roman Catholic ever nominated for President by a major political party, had been badly defeated in 1928. Other possible shortcomings included Kennedy's youth, his family wealth, and his relative inexperience in international affairs. Some Democrats opposed Kennedy because they thought he was too conservative, and because he never actively opposed Senator McCarthy.

Kennedy decided that the key to the presidential nominations would be to win as many state primary elections as he could. He believed that victories in the primaries would prove he could win the presidency. Kennedy entered and won primaries in seven states.

At the Democratic national convention, Kennedy's chief opponents for the presidential nomination were Senator Lyndon B. Johnson of Texas, Senator Stuart Symington of Missouri, and Stevenson. Kennedy won on the first ballot. The delegates, at the request of Kennedy, nominated Johnson for Vice-President.

The Republicans chose Vice-President Richard M. Nixon to oppose Kennedy for the presidency. Kennedy's old opponent, Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., then U. S. delegate to the UN, was Nixon's running mate.

The 1960 campaign was a hard-fought race. Both candidates were young, vigorous campaigners. At first, most experts believed Nixon would win. He had the advantage of being Vice-President under Eisenhower, an unusually popular President.

But Kennedy was not as unknown as some persons believed. His good looks, wealth, and attractive wife had made him a popular subject for articles in newspapers and magazines. Television also helped Kennedy greatly during his four televised debates with Nixon. His poise helped answer criticism that he lacked the maturity needed for the presidency. The debates marked the first time that presidential candidates argued campaign issues face to face.

Nixon ran chiefly on the record of the Eisenhower administration.

Kennedy promised to lead Americans to a "New Frontier." He charged that, under the Republicans, the United States had lost ground to Russia in the Cold War.

Kennedy defeated Nixon by fewer than 120,000 popular votes. But he won a clear majority of votes in the electoral college. Kennedy received 303 electoral votes to 219 for Nixon. Senator Harry F. Byrd of Virginia received 15 electoral votes.

Kennedy was inaugurated President on January 20, 1961. As he took charge of the federal government, he faces such internal problems as increased



racial tensions, unemployment, and a sluggish economy. In foreign affairs, he faced the continuing spread of Communist influence, and the threat of nuclear war.

The New Frontier, the name Kennedy gave to his program, got off to a slow start.

But the 87th Congress finally began passing measures sponsored by the administration. In April 1961, the legislators approved aid to economically depressed areas. In May, Congress approved an increase in the minimum hourly wage from \$1 to \$1.25. In September 1962, Congress passed the President's Trade Expansion Act. The act gave the President wide powers to cut tariffs so the U. S. could trade freely with the European Common Market.

One of the most successful of Kennedy's programs was the U. S. Peace Corps. It was launched by executive order in March 1961, and was later authorized by Congress.

The corps sent thousands of Americans abroad to help people in developing nations raise their standards of living. The Peace Corps seemed to carry the enthusiasm of the President to the people of other countries, who often called it "Kennedy's Corps." Kennedy also met major legislative defeats. Congress rejected a cabinet-level Department of Urban Affairs and Kennedy's plan for medical care for the aged. Both measures later passed during Johnson's presidency. Kennedy's farm program also suffered defeats.

Kennedy reorganized the nation's defense policies by increasing conventional weapons. He wanted to be prepared for non-nuclear wars and to make every effort to avoid using nuclear weapons.

In March 1962, the major steel producers signed a contract with the steelworkers union that increased workers' benefits, but not their wages. Kennedy praised the contract, which he said would help prevent inflation. On April 10, the United States Steel Corporation led a move to raise steel prices \$6 a ton. Kennedy angrily denounced the move as causing unnecessary inflation, and the companies canceled it.

In May, prices on the New York Stock Exchange made their sharpest drop since 1929. Many people blamed the Kennedy administration. They felt the President's action toward the steel companies reflected an antibusiness attitude. The President tried to answer the antibusiness charges in a speech. He said there are three great ideas, or "myths," in our domestic affairs that may prevent effective action: (1) that the federal debt is too large; (2) that the federal government is too big; and (3) that business cannot place its confidence in his administration.

The President aided business by increasing tax benefits for companies investing in new equipment. In 1963, he proposed a \$10 billion tax cut, which included lowering corporate taxes. He thought that the public would be able to spend more if taxes were cut.

The increased spending would generate new business, and the taxes received from an expanded economy would more than offset the revenue lost in the tax cut.

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Demands for equal rights for blacks became the major domestic issue during the Kennedy administration. In 1961, a group of black and white freedom riders entered Montgomery, Ala., by bus to test local segregation laws. Rioting broke out, and Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy sent U. S. marshals to the city to help restore order. In 1962, James Meredith became the first black to enroll at the University of Mississippi, despite much opposition. Two people were killed in the rioting that followed on the university campus at Oxford. The President ordered 3,000 federal troops to the area to restore order. In 1963, demands by blacks for equal civil and economic rights increased. Racial protests and demonstrations took place in all parts of the United States, in the North and the South. In May 1963, rioting broke out in Birmingham, Ala. In June, the President federalized the Alabama National Guard to enforce the integration of the University of Alabama. Kennedy federalized the Guard again in September to ensure the integration of public schools in three Alabama cities. On August 28, 1963, about 200,000 people staged a Freedom March in Washington, D. C., to demonstrate their demands for equal rights for blacks.

To meet the growing demands of the blacks, Kennedy asked Congress to pass legislation requiring hotels, motels, and restaurants to admit customers regardless of race.

The President also asked Congress to grant the Attorney General authority to begin lawsuits to desegregate schools on behalf of private citizens who were unable to start legal action themselves. In requesting the sweeping civil rights legislation, the President said, "The time has come for the Congress of the United States to join with the executive and judicial branches in making it

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clear to all that race has no place in American life or law." Kennedy's Democratic party gained four seats in the Senate and lost only two seats in the House in the 1962 elections. This was only the third time in the 1900's that the party in power increased its representation in Congress in a midterm election. In his second year in office, Kennedy appointed two justices of the Supreme Court. The first was Byron R.

White, then Deputy Attorney General. The second was Secretary of Labor Arthur J.

Goldberg.

The Kennedy's brought youth and informality to the White House. Caroline and John, Jr., were the youngest children of a President to live in the White House in more than 60 years. Caroline's antics and bright comments amused the nation.

Women in many countries copied Jacqueline Kennedy's stylish clothes and hairdo.

In 1961, Mrs Kennedy flew to Europe with her husband. Wherever she went, huge crowds gathered. President Kennedy presented himself to a Paris luncheon by saying, " I am the man who accompanied Jacqueline Kennedy to Paris . . . " In March 1962, Mrs Kennedy toured Pakistan and India without the President.

Mrs Kennedy won praise for her redecoration of the White House. She gathered furnishings of past Presidents and made the mansion a historic showplace and a tourist attraction.

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The President gave recognition to the creative arts by appointing a Special Advisor on the Arts. Many artists were invited to the White House.

On April 17, 1961, Cuban rebels invaded their homeland to overthrow Fidel Castro, the Communist-supported dictator. The assault ended in disaster. President Kennedy accepted blame for the ill-fated invasion, which had been planned by the United States.

Another Cuban crisis erupted in October 1962, when the United States learned that Russia had established missiles on the island capable of striking U. S. cities. Kennedy ordered the U. S. Navy to quarantine Cuba. Navy ships were ordered to turn back all ships delivering Russian missiles to Cuba. Kennedy also called about 14, 000 Air Force reservists to active duty. For a week, war seemed likely. Then, Russian Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev ordered all Soviet offensive missiles removed. The President then lifted the quarantine.

In 1961, Russia threatened to give Communist East Germany control over the West's air and land supply routes to Berlin. The threat was part of a Russian effort to end the combined American, British, French, and Russian control of Berlin, begun when World War II ended. The western nations opposed any threat to the freedom of West Berlin.

In June 1961, Kennedy discussed Berlin with Khrushchev at a two-day meeting in Vienna, Austria. Nothing was settled, and the crisis deepened. Both countries increased their military strength. In August, the East Germans built a wall between East and West Berlin to prevent people from fleeing to the West. Kennedy called up about 145, 000 members of the National Guard

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and reservists to strengthen U. S. military defense. They were released about 10 months later.

In 1961, the United States established the Alliance for Progress, a 10-year program of aid for Latin-American countries that agreed to begin democratic reforms. The President hoped this program would bring social and political reform as well as fight poverty.

In 1961, Kennedy was interviewed by Khrushchev's son-in-law, then editor of Izvestia, the Russian government newspaper. Izvestia printed the entire interview.

In 1962, Congress approved a plan to purchase up to \$100 million worth of bonds to help finance the U. N.

The western Atlantic alliance remained strong, but Kennedy had trouble establishing a united NATO nuclear force. President Charles de Gaulle refused to commit France to the NATO nuclear force. He preferred an independent role for his country.

Kennedy made a 10-day tour of Europe in the summer of 1963. He visited West Germany, Italy, Ireland, and Great Britain.

Southeast Asia continued to be a trouble spot. Kennedy ordered U. S. military advisers to the area in 1961 and 1962 when the Communists threatened South Vietnam and Thailand. Kennedy also sent advisers to Laos. In the summer and autumn of 1963, the U. S. severely criticized the South Vietnamese government headed by Ngo Dinh Diem for its repressive policies against the country's Buddhists. The government imprisoned many Buddhist

leaders and students who were leading demonstrations against the Diem government. Kennedy sent former Republican senator and vice-presidential candidate Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., to South Vietnam as ambassador in 1963.

In September 1961, the Russians resumed testing atomic weapons. The tests broke an un-official test ban that had lasted nearly three years. The United States began testing shortly after the Russians resumed their tests, but the U. S. conducted its tests underground, which created no dangerous fallout. But in April 1962, the United States resumed testing in the atmosphere over the Pacific Ocean.

In July 1963, Russia, the United States, and Great Britain signed a treaty banning atomic testing in the atmosphere, outer space, and under water. Testing was permitted underground. The treaty avoided the issue of internal inspections, which had deadlocked previous negotiations. Many countries that had no atomic weapons also signed the treaty.

The U. S. Senate approved the treaty in September by a vote of 80 to 19.

This section is in a completely different file. This area is then written in more detail. Kennedy's Assassination