



JFK

The questions I wish
you could answer

BY AVA ROOSEVELT

Each November 22, for over half of a century, marks the anniversary of the assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the youngest and only catholic president of the United States, and the only Kennedy to reside in the White House. His death shuttered the muffled dreams of millions worldwide, including Poland where I stood, a mere child, holding my father's hand only to comprehend years later why everyone sobbed.

Countless investigations conducted by the FBI, the Warren Commission, the United States House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA), numerous films and documentaries with far-reaching theories, including JFK's accidental shooting by a Secret Service Agent George Hickey, yielded no conclusive results. The mystery remains unsolved except for one undisputed fact. Lee Harvey Oswald, a man who fired the shots which killed the president, was silenced, shot to death by Jack Ruby, fueling the speculation that Oswald was not acting alone and that Kennedy's assassination was most probably a result of a conspiracy.

I often ponder the questions I would ask JFK, if I could, and how he might answer...

MY THEORETICAL Q & A WITH JFK

Your well-known determination to become the president dates to your teens. The tragic death of your brother Joe Jr., the heir apparent to your father's political ambitions, paved the journey to your presidency.

Fate dealt you a trump card extraordinaire and you played it well. Did you ever feel guilty for stepping into the shoes of the man many idolized, you included, and following his destiny?

Luckily, you didn't live to see the pursuant assassination of your brother Robert F. Kennedy and Ted Kennedy's Chappaquiddick scandal, which forever shuttered your father Joseph Patrick "Joe" Kennedy Sr.'s dream to see another of his sons in the White House. A master manipulator and a father of 'political PR' in the U.S., Joe Sr. spent his life cleansing the Kennedy name of any innuendos pertaining to its less-than-perfect-Irish immigrant background. But despite his vast fortune, he could not stop the Kennedy curse.

Were you given a choice, and had you lived, would you follow in your father's steps to see your own children aspire to the political office, or would you rather let them live lives less exposed to the possibility of perpetuating the Kennedy curse? Given the tragic death of your son John, and your daughter Caroline's ambassadorship to Japan, is there such a thing as controlling one's destiny with the limitless financial resources at one's disposal?

The Bay of Pigs Invasion, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Space Race — Project Apollo (which later culminated in the moon landings), the



John Fitzgerald Kennedy in the oval office (circa 1961)

building of the Berlin Wall, the African-American Civil Rights Movement, and the far less-popular increased U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War, challenged your presidency from the moment you took office.

I wonder what it took, in face of your numerous physical disabilities, to step up to the prospect of changing the landscape of the nation, the world, and outer space.

With his movie-star looks, and unlike many politicians, JFK never pretended to be a commoner. He could do no wrong even while philandering. He was enormously wealthy, yet understood the poor. He shared Martin Luther's dream and, like him, might have died because of it. He married to fuel the myth of his nearly-aristocratic-pedigree. The man who accompanied Jackie Kennedy to Paris was idolized by the American youth, beloved by millions and managed to elevate the American presidency to the status of Camelot.

Which one of your accomplishments gave you most joy, made you most proud? I would give everything to know what went through your mind as your presidential motorcade turned the corner into Daley Plaza, which within seconds was destined to become your last public appearance.

As those actually directly responsible for JFK's death might never be brought to justice, I wonder which of his vast accomplishments concluded in the first thousand days of his presidency (and those voted into the law posthumously) might have led to the evil act to silence the voice of inspiration, a zeal for achievement, courage in face of adversities, hope, pride and unity of one nation and millions of Americans.

Mr. President, do you think the path to greatness must always be bathed in blood? What would you do differently, given a choice, which might have spared your life? Or wouldn't you? ●