

HISTORY

Daily Sentinel hastily remade front page 50 years ago

Daily Sentinel reporters had just settled down and started to relax after the pressures of meeting their 11 a.m. deadline for what was then an afternoon newspaper on Nov. 22, 1963.

It had been pretty much a ho-hum news day, with the biggest Page 1 story being about President John F. Kennedy's trip to Dallas that morning. Probably half of the 10 news staff members had already gone to lunch, leaving only a skeleton crew for what was expected to be a routine lunch hour.

I was still at my desk, doing some last-minute cleanup chores and planning to leave for lunch about 12:30 p.m.

It was about noon, as I remember, when the ominous sound of "five bells" rang from the teletypes that delivered our daily Associated Press news. This was the era long before computers had simplified newspaper publishing, and "five bells" was quite unusual in the peaceful, post-World War II era of 1963. The sound was an alert to anyone within hearing distance of the teletype — a typewriter-like machine which purveyed news from all corners of the world to newsrooms — that a momentous event was being reported.

Someone — probably then-city editor Alan Pritchard — strolled over to the teletype,

gasped and reported that President John F. Kennedy had been shot while he was riding in a Dallas motorcade and was enroute to the hospital. While we were still digesting that news and deciding whether to remake the front page, another foreboding five bells rang out.



MARY LOUISE GIBLIN HENDERSON

I think we all rushed to the teletype that time and learned that the president had died about 12:30 p.m. Mountain Standard Time, or 1:30 p.m. in Dallas.

Rita Pritchard, Alan's wife and the newsroom secretary, burst into tears. She had, along with Alan and me, been one of three Sentinel staffers at a small, pre-dinner meet-and-greet-event for about 35 select Democratic leaders during Kennedy's visit to Grand Junction four years earlier.

While the whole news staff felt devastated by the presidential death, we knew there was little time for grief, because the event mandated immediate action. Since I had covered Kennedy's 1959 visit when he was still seeking the presidential nomination, I handled the main local story, recalling details of that visit and the two or three quick casual conversations I'd had with him.

The late Jack Kisling and another reporter, Ken Clark, handled local-reaction stories. Kisling later became a Denver Post columnist, wrote at least one novel and died a number



DAILY SENTINEL FILE PHOTO

A group of Daily Sentinel workers watch as news of President John F. Kennedy's assassination comes across. Five bells rang from the teletypes and delivered the message that would change America on that fateful day.

of years ago. I lost contact with Clark when he moved from The Daily Sentinel a few years after the Kennedy disaster.

I know that I had my story ready to go in about 35 minutes,

and the other two reporters weren't far behind. As I recall, we were set to go to press with a new front page made up completely of Kennedy-related stories about one hour after

the Earth-shaking news had broken.

Our headline — in red, of course — was the size that old-time newsmen irreverently described as "second coming"

type. It was used only for events like the end of World War II, was nearly two inches high and read, "Kennedy Slain."

Putting the front page together was a time-consuming task, starting when a reporter tapped out his or her story on a typewriter. The story went to the linotype, where each line was cast in hot metal. An inked proof was checked for errors, and, if necessary, lines were reset. The type was then placed by hand in a page-size form, and a metal casting was taken and placed on the press. Then the press was ready to roll, and the day's newspaper was printed.

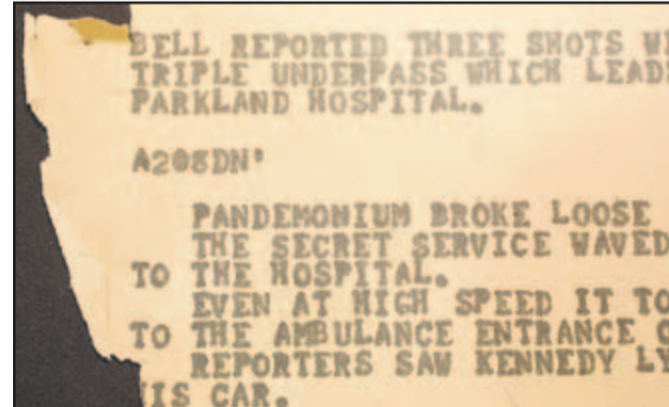
That fateful day, the afternoon edition was on the street two hours after we learned about the tragedy, and most subscribers got their newspapers only about an hour late.

I am a "live in the present" person, and I have no boxes of mementos to remind me of past triumphs or tragedies. However, I have never been able to part with the book, "The Torch Is Passed," published by The Associated Press shortly after Kennedy's assassination, nor with a brief personal note from Kennedy dated Nov. 26, 1959. In the note Kennedy thanked me for meeting with his brother, Ted, at a September planning session for Kennedy's Nov. 30, 1959 Grand Junction visit.

I have long been familiar with the practice of stamping signatures on letters from politicians. In some 1959 correspondence from the Kennedy camp, his signature is meticulously written and obviously a stamp.

But the signature on my November 1959 note is hastily signed "Jack Kennedy," in an almost-illegible scrawl, and I have always hoped and chosen to believe that Kennedy actually signed it.

Mary Louise Giblin Henderson is a former political reporter for The Daily Sentinel. She is retired and lives in California.



This Thursday, Oct. 31, 2013, photo of an Associated Press teletype news bulletin from Friday, Nov. 22, 1963, shows news that President Kennedy had been shot in Dallas. The document is in the AP Corporate Archives in New York.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



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12/29, Sunday	12/24, Tuesday, 12 Noon	
12/27, Out & About	12/20, Friday, 3 PM	
12/29, Real Estate Weekly	12/20, Friday, 4 PM	
1/1, Wednesday	12/27, Friday, 3 PM	
1/2, Thursday	12/27, Friday, 3 PM	
1/3, Friday	12/30, Monday, 12 Noon	
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1/1, Wednesday	12/24, Tuesday, 4 PM
1/2, Thursday	12/24, Tuesday, 4 PM
1/3, Friday	12/26, Thursday, 4 PM

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The Daily Sentinel offices will be closed Wednesdays, Dec. 25th & Jan 1st.

Obama pays tribute to legacy of John Kennedy

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Honoring the legacy of John F. Kennedy, President Barack Obama laid a wreath at the assassinated president's gravesite as a nation remembers that terrible day in Dallas a half-century ago today. Obama also recognized a group of distinguished Americans — including Bill Clinton and Oprah Winfrey — with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, an award created by Kennedy.

Obama was joined at Arlington National Cemetery on Wednesday by Clinton, and each president held hands with Ethel Kennedy, widow of Robert F. Kennedy, as they climbed a flight of stairs to the burial site on a steep hillside overlooking the nation's capital.

First lady Michelle Obama and former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton helped their husbands place a large wreath of white flowers in front of the roped-off gravesite of America's 35th president, which is marked by an ever-burning flame.

Both couples placed their hands over their hearts as taps sounded near a U.S. flag at half-staff before greeting Kennedy relatives, including some who arrived in Obama's motorcade.

The day of tributes began at the White House, where Obama awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom to 16 living and deceased Americans for their contributions in fields ranging from sports and entertainment to science and public service.