

# Life Of A President



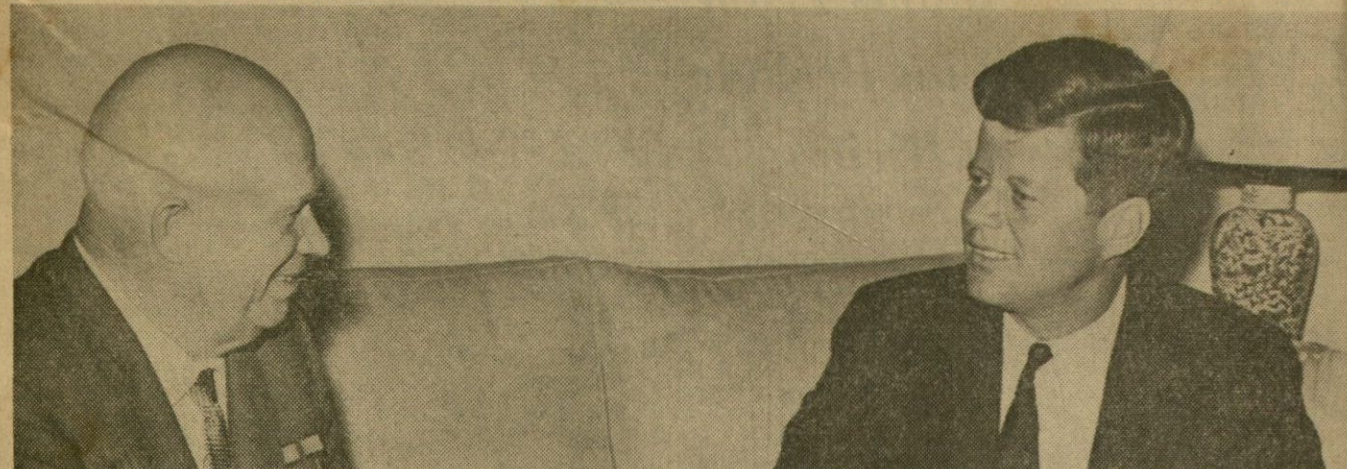
PRESIDENT KENNEDY AT CAPE CANAVERAL NOV. 16  
... Six day's later, an assassin's bullet



IN FORT WORTH YESTERDAY MORNING  
... He applauds his wife at a gathering



CRISIS AS SENATOR  
... After back operation



KHRUSHCHEV AND KENNEDY IN VIENNA  
... They failed to solve the world's ills



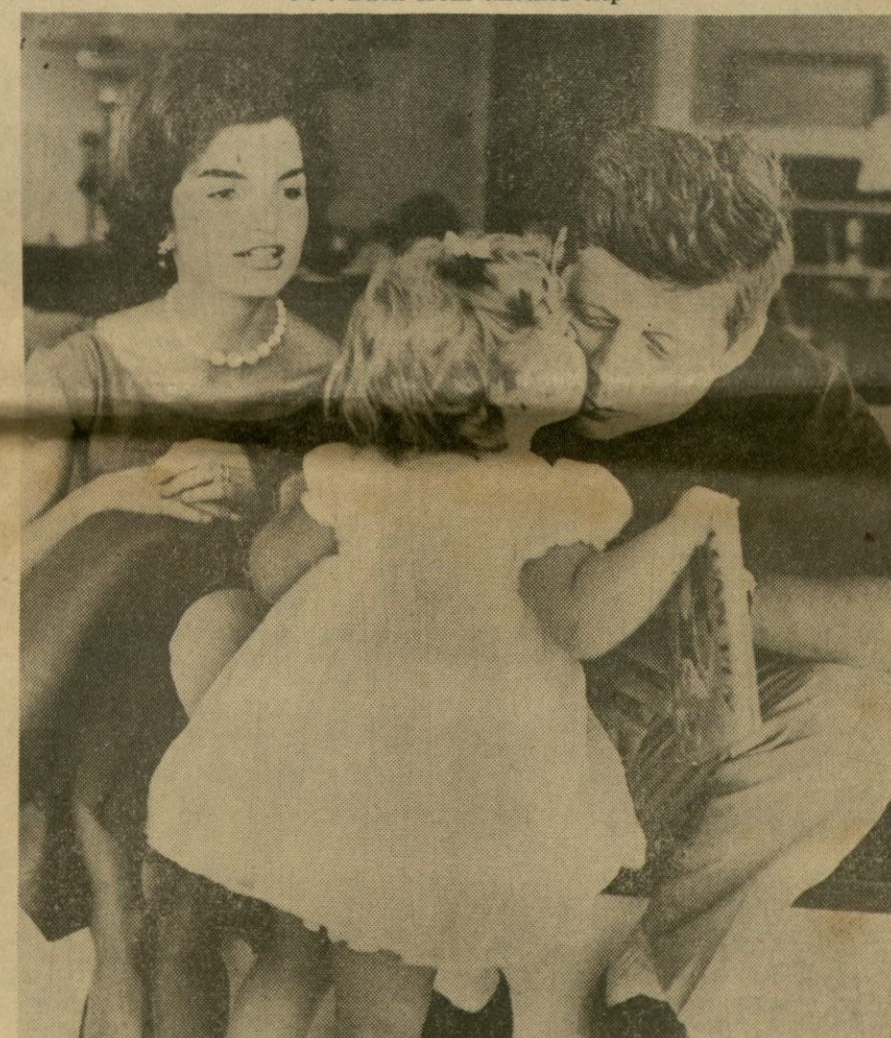
PT SKIPPER  
... In World War II



PRESIDENT KENNEDY AND SON JOHN  
... Back from another trip



THE CAMPAIGNER  
... In Congress days



THE KENNEDYS AND CAROLINE  
... A little girl has lost her father

## A Luncheon With A Courageous Man

By MARTIN ANDERSEN

Publisher, Orlando Sentinel

NO MATTER WHETHER you agreed with him on all his policies or not, you had to admire John F. Kennedy.

He had a certain tough courage which is difficult to define, because it was a sort of courage which carried him forward in behalf of his beliefs in the face of great criticism from a large segment of the public and a large segment of the country.

He was a controversial figure, as he had to be, because he was bold enough to step up and stand out for his new and revolutionary concept of government and rights for all the people — with no thought to creed or color.

And yet, when the cowardly assassin's bullet cut him down from ambush yesterday, the nation was shocked in its grief. Strong men and strong women wept after exposing themselves to hour after hour of the TV exposure of the tragic story. Others, too stunned to cry, thought of this young man's widow, his children, his mother, father, brothers, sisters and thought mostly of his great and sincere ordeal for his country.

President Kennedy was not a strong man physically. He was at death's door during World War II, after a Jap destroyer had cut his PT boat in half and left him for dead in an ocean of sharks. Ever since that time his back gave him trouble. There were times when he could hardly walk, so great was the pain in his repaired and wounded

spine. But he did walk and he did travel and he did work and he did speak and argue and fight for his program and he courageously kept his suffering mostly his own secret.

WE SAT TO the immediate right of the President one day at a luncheon in the White House some two years ago, with a group of six or seven other Florida publishers.

We occupied that seat of honor because our name came up first alphabetically. Greater publishers with larger newspapers, more circulation and more money were scattered around the table farther away. But President Kennedy followed the protocol of the alphabet and there we were not only in the White House for the first time in our life but we were having lunch with a President for the first time in our life and we were also closer to him than anybody else — except the man on his left.

The group of us arrived ahead of the President and were in a sitting room when he arrived. Senator Smathers introduced all of us to the President and as he gave us a firm, warm handclasp he called our names as they were announced by Senator Smathers. A waiter brought around cocktails. Martinis and Scotch and bourbon and sherry. Most of us had a cocktail of strong liquor but the President took a small glass of sherry wine.

He never finished his drink, even though several minutes of conversation passed and some of the crowd took a second cocktail.

This was a busy man. There was trouble in Viet Nam. There was trouble in Berlin. There was trouble in Africa and the Cuban thing and the Bay of Pigs fiasco had just passed. The President had plenty on his mind. But he appeared calm and collected and talked first to one and then to another of us, just about like a district governor of a Rotary club would do. There was, of course, a certain austerity about the scene. There is no denying that we all held him and the high office he represented in awe. And we all addressed him, with care, as "Mr. President."

WHEN I SPEAK of the President's certain tough courage, I refer to his stand on Cuba.

We began asking him questions about his next move on that island, shortly after we were seated at the round table.

I am not going to quote the President because Sen. Smathers announced before the luncheon that this was just an informal social gathering and not a press conference in any sense of the word.

But the President gave us to understand that he did not give air protection or an air offensive to the invading Cuban fighters at the Bay of Pigs for the simple reason that he did not dare risk a counter military move in Berlin or elsewhere or in "ten other spots" which Russia was able to initiate and which possibly would wind up in the last world war to be fought by modern man.

The popular thing before him of

course was a marine landing on the island of Cuba and the elimination of Castro.

He admitted that this could be done — at that time — in 10 days of fighting.

He seemed to think that Castro, if given plenty of rope, would hang himself. And we would have been saved all the lives of several thousand Marines in Cuba plus the lives of perhaps several hundred thousand of Americans in "local wars" or incidents in a dozen different spots all over the universe.

At the time I disagreed with his plan, but later on, as I began to mull his program over in my mind, I realized the chance he would have been taking to invade Cuba. Not a personal risk, but a risk of many thousands of others. And we understood, as we thought over the situation months later, that the President was willing and able to let the Castro crisis ride for awhile and perhaps erase this problem in some other manner.

Right or wrong, such a move demanded a strange sort of courage. The country, and Florida in particular, was crying for action and hollering about the Reds being just 90 miles away. But the President was able to ride with the punches as he understood there is more to the problem of running our country and keeping the peace than teaching this bearded upstart a lesson. He had more information than I had and more information than any of us around that table had. He also had a program and his program was

aimed at peace and survival and the prevention of unnecessary killing of American boys in a dozen little wars all around the world.

WE LOOKED DOWN at the President's shoes as we sat there and listened to him banter questions put to him by the publishers.

The shoes looked old to us. They were brown and had not been shined, it appeared, for several days. They must have been comfortable shoes and we surmised that he must have argued with his butler or valet about wearing them day after day as any ordinary American will wear his favorite shoes and, being the busiest man in the country, he just didn't have the time nor the inclination to get them shined.

I think he had on a brown suit. Neat enough but it did not appear any more expensive than our own. He wore a shirt with a slight pin stripe and a blue necktie.

He appeared to be not in too good health. And shortly after our visit, he did go to bed with a cold or some other slight illness.

He was a bundle of nerves and as he talked, he played with a piece of toast with his right hand, breaking it in small bits there on the table. He drank milk and after his lunch he pulled out a small cigar, little longer and a little fatter than a cigarette. He did not offer anybody a cigar, but a little later, the waiter passed cigars and cigarettes.

AFTER THE LUNCHEON he guided us into the elevator and we got off on a higher floor and there was

his beautiful wife.

"Why didn't you come down and have lunch with us?" he asked her.

"I would have, if I had known about it," she replied.

Then the two of them paraded us through the various rooms of the White House. Jackie explaining each room and each piece of furniture and each picture.

There was no hurry.

The President and his wife appeared to have all the time in the world. Just like your next door neighbor. We wound up on a portico looking out over what I would call the spacious back yard of the White House. Workmen were putting up collapsible seats for some affair scheduled for the next day.

There seemed to be no end to the job of being President — either for John Fitzgerald Kennedy or his wife.

He belonged to the people.

One may disagree with some of his policies, but he had the size and the touch of greatness. He cared nought for money and on most occasions carried none with him. Lyndon Johnson used to chide him during the campaign that he, Lyndon, always had to pay for the drug store lunch they would eat on the fly.

He belonged to the people and the people loved him as an individual, because he was a warm, charming human being with a beautiful wife and two wonderful children. And because he was fundamentally a great American who believed in rights for all of the people.