

when the president was taken to Parkland Hospital, and then another reporting that he had died.

We, at that point, did not know if it was as major conspiracy, so as administrator of GSA, and being responsible for all the federal buildings, we had calls out to all of our security forces to secure the buildings and to be very much alert. Flags were all dropped to half mast. I stayed in the office well into the evening. I was busy and devastated. I couldn't believe that this man whom I loved so much, and had so much respect for, was dead.

Orville Freeman We were having breakfast. We were about a couple of hours out of Honolulu. We had just started eating, and someone came down and said, "The secretary of state would like to see you," and I said, "Tell him I'll go as soon as I finish my breakfast." He said, "I think he wants to see you right away." And I said, "What the devil could be important enough"—we've got an eight-hour trip—"to not let me be able to finish my breakfast?" We walked in, and he was as white as a sheet. He said, "The president's been shot." I said, "Where was he hit?" And he said, "He was hit in the head." And I said, "Well, he's all right; I was shot in the head, and it didn't kill me." This was in World War II. We didn't know whether he was alive or he had died.

Finally we did make contact with somebody who told the secretary. It came over the loudspeaker, and it said, "The president is dead, God save our country." You could have cut the melancholy in that plane with a very dull knife. Gradually different people drifted up to me because they knew that I knew Johnson much better than they did, and they asked me what kind of president I thought he would be; what would he do, and so forth. It was a long, long trip and a very sad one.

Robert Manning We took off from Honolulu in one of the presidential aircraft and were several hundred miles west of there. Several cabinet secretaries were with us, as was Pierre Salinger. I had been in the press, so I knew by the sound that there was a flash on the news ticker. I walked toward the communications area, and the sergeant had a piece of wire copy in his hand. He said, "The secretary [Rusk] will have to see this." It was a flash saying: "Dallas. President Kennedy shot." Then a bul-

letin: "Perhaps shot fatally." We took it to Rusk and he asked me to bring the cabinet secretaries to his compartment.

We immediately got on the phone with the White House Situation Room. They confirmed that something had happened and that the president had been rushed to the hospital. Rusk got on the public address system and told everybody we had some bad, unclear news: President Kennedy had been wounded, and we were going to turn back. Salinger got in touch with the White House and used his code name. He said, "This is Wayside. What word do you have on Lancer?" At the other end the fellow said, "Lancer is dead." Rusk then went back on the PA system and said, "I am sorry to have to bring you this grievous news, but President Kennedy has been killed. We now have a new president. May God bless our president and the United States of America."

The news then came in that someone named Oswald [Lee Harvey Oswald, presumed assassin of Kennedy], who had been in the Soviet Union, had done this. The news caused great alarm.

Rusk had allowed me to bring two or three correspondents on the plane as we headed back to Washington from Honolulu. They, Salinger, and three or four others of us got into this utterly reckless poker game: No one cared whether they won or lost. Others just stared into space or comforted each other. It was an endless trip; it really was a weird sensation. Here were seven or eight top officials of the most powerful nation on earth, complete prisoners in this aluminum tube.

John Lewis I was getting into a car on the Fisk campus when I heard President Kennedy had been shot. From time to time I had disagreed with President Kennedy. But the man! I adored him! For me, he could do no wrong. I was distraught. I wondered: Where do we go from here? We were robbed of something. If Kennedy had lived and been reelected, and if Martin Luther King had lived, where would we be as a nation? I used to disagree with my friends in SNCC who said, "We don't need a great leader." John F. Kennedy represented the best of our public servants.

Bui Diem When he was assassinated I felt this greatly in my heart, and I think many of the Vietnamese felt the same way.