

Most have never forgotten where they heard of JFK's murder

Written by News Desk

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By [BOB MARTIN](#)

It was 12:40 (CST) on November 22, 1963 when the bells on the Associated Press teletype machine at The Florence Times began their clanging noise. I rushed to the machine and watched as it spit out these words:

"BULLETIN.

"DALLAS — PRESIDENT KENNEDY WAS SHOT TODAY JUST AS HIS MOTORCADE LEFT DOWNTOWN DALLAS. MRS. KENNEDY JUMPED UP AND GRABBED HIM. SHE CRIED: 'OH, NO!' THE MOTORCADE SPED ON."

Just a few minutes earlier in the Dallas AP offices, the telephone rang and bureau chief Bob Johnson answered. On the phone was staff photographer James W. "Ike" Altgens, almost out of breath. He had recorded the Dealey Plaza chaos — including images of Kennedy grasping his throat and of a secret service agent reaching for the first lady across the limo's trunk.

Bob, the president's been shot," he shouted from a pay phone. "Ike, how do you know?" Johnson demanded. "I was shooting pictures then and I saw it," Altgens said. "Ike, you saw that?" "Yes, there was blood on his face." Johnson typed furiously, folding in Altgens' details.

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Instantly, in newsrooms everywhere, bells clanged on wire teletype machines as they churned out the unimaginable, line by line. Newspapers and broadcasters quickly ripped off the copy from their wire machines and passed it on, mainly in the same brief form.

It has been said that "Fifty years on, that first bulletin — its type spilling down the page from being pulled by some forgotten editor as it printed out — is an artifact of the moment." It is preserved in the AP news service's corporate archives. I was just a young reporter and it is still a moment vivid in my memory.

The fiftieth anniversary will be this Friday.

During the half century since President Kennedy was assassinated, we have heard about many conspiracy theories. However decades of investigations, hearings, documents, records, books and interviews have failed to satisfy conspiracy theorists with a definitive answer to question as to whether or not Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone when he shot the President.

At one time or another, doubters of the lone gunman theory "have accused 42 groups, 82 assassins and 214 people of being involved in the assassination," according to author Vincent Bugliosi.

Kennedy visited Huntsville and Muscle Shoals in 1963.

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