

JEREMY FITZPATRICK

JFK's dreams still within reach

We have all seen the shooting. It plays out like a Greek tragedy — we know what is going to happen, but we can do nothing to stop it.

The motorcade approaches — so slowly. The man is smiling, his wife in her pink suit.

Then his arms are up around his neck. His head snaps violently backward.

The blood. John F. Kennedy has just been killed. The scene is played again, and you watch again.

This Sunday marks the anniversary of Kennedy's death 29 years ago. It should be rainy and cold — Nov. 22 should always be a dark day.

What really happened in Dallas is a mystery. Who really killed Kennedy is a question we still ask today.

We are told he was killed by a lunatic — Lee Harvey Oswald — with a gun bought through the mail. We don't know for sure, because Oswald was shot and killed two days later.

What a country we live in. Oliver Stone did a lot to inform people about the Kennedy assassination with his movie "JFK." We have all heard about the magic bullet, the supposed CIA connections to Oswald and the grassy knoll.

Because of Stone's film — even if he made a lot of it up — people have taken a renewed interest in what happened to Kennedy. Even people our age, not even born when Kennedy died.

Thanks to Stone, we know a lot about how Kennedy was killed on Nov. 22, 1963. But what do we know about the man who was sacrificed that day?

We cannot remember, as our parents do, where they were when they heard that Kennedy had been killed. We cannot know what it was like to live through his 1,000 days as president.

But from books and documentaries, we can know him some. He was different from the politicians we have today.

George Bush, our last leader, summed up his philosophy in three words: "No new taxes." We have yet to see how Bill Clinton, our new leader, will sum up his.

Kennedy's message was different. "I don't run for the presidency telling you that if you elect me life is going to be easy, because I don't think life is going to be easy for Americans in the next decade," he said. "But I run for the presidency because I do not want it said in the years our generation held power that those were the years when America began to slip."

Kennedy is gone, but his words live on.

His inauguration speech, calling Americans to service, still rings true. His speeches on civil rights and space exploration still remain as examples of a leadership based on high expectations of the dreams people are capable of achieving.

To hear those speeches is to be moved — even 30 years later. The words once filled people with a sense that Americans could do anything.

Now we can only imagine what it was like to live in such times under Kennedy's inspirational leadership.

The belief that America can do anything is hard to find in people anymore. It was wounded with Kennedy in Dallas 29 years ago. Although it took longer to die, it eventually fell as well.

Now we hear only of fear and worry about what the future will hold for us. Our leaders do not ask, and we do not offer "what we can do for our country."

A man stands up at a presidential debate and asks what the candidates propose to do to take care of him.

So when we observe Kennedy's death this Sunday, we grieve for him and for what he stood for — for a United States that was largely past before most of us were born.

That time is not gone forever. We

can choose to get it back. Were Kennedy alive today, he would be leading the way.

It would be a mistake in remembering Kennedy to think that if we only could recapture our past — a time "made simple by the loss of detail" as Robert Frost described it — we could make the present simple as well.

It would be a mistake to imagine that if Kennedy were president today, he could solve our problems easily.

John Kennedy's years as president were turbulent and difficult. Today the Cold War has ended, and we are much safer.

But there was also a sense that the United States was moving in the Kennedy years. Our country may not have been as safe, but we seemed to have a purpose and a direction.

How large a role Kennedy played in America's success then can certainly be debated. But there can be no doubt that he set a tone of excellence and service that helped define our national purpose.

Kennedy liked to quote a Greek definition of happiness: "The full use of your powers along the lines of excellence."

How different it must have been to have a leader who both expected and asked excellence of us. Now our leaders ask little, and we are satisfied with their request.

Probably there will be little fanfare about Kennedy's death Sunday.

Memory fades.

If we do remember, however, it shouldn't be of Zapruder films or assassination theories. It should be about a man who had no illusions and still believed government could be a positive force in people's lives.

It should be about a time that passed with him — a time we could repeat today if only we would dream again.

Fitzpatrick is a junior political science major, a sports and news reporter and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.



CRAIG HECKMAN

All are equal under whose law?

Conservatives have been incessantly complaining for the last year about the media's liberal bias. Well, in Sunday's Omaha World-Herald, conservatives got a chance to experience a little favoritism.

The headline to the newspaper's lead editorial was "History Should Look Kindly on Efforts to Free Hostages." Sorry, but I don't think history should or will.

First some history. The idea behind the Iran initiative was to contact moderates in Iran — itself not particularly easy or realistic — and to try to open up relations with these factions by selling them arms.

With these arms sales it was hoped that the moderates in Iran would somehow be able to influence the groups holding American hostages to release some or all of them.

It did not matter that former President Reagan maintained that the United States would not deal with terrorists.

Part of the problem stemmed directly from the people involved: Oliver North, William Casey and John Poindexter to name just a few. The men were self-avowed ideologues, totally committed to what they believed regardless of all else. They were so committed that mere laws would not stand in their way.

This is the bottom line: Those involved broke laws, specifically the ban on sending arms to Iran and later the Boland amendment, which was passed by Congress prohibiting the United States or its representatives from providing aid to the Contra rebels.

In addition, any time arms are transferred, certain key members of Congress MUST be advised. This is what the Constitution called a system of checks and balances.

The arms shipments to Iran remained secret with not one single member of Congress being informed. This is illegal.

Further, knowing what they were doing was illegal, the arms were not shipped directly to Iran but were first sent to Israel. And not by government transport. All shipments were handled by various "marginally" legal transport companies owned by the CIA.

There were large amounts of money involved with this shipment. Don't think that the arms were just given to Iran, they were sold. In fact, they were sold for far more than the CIA had paid for them in the first place.

Someone came up with the great idea to use this money to circumvent the Boland amendment. So these profits were turned over to various operatives, including retired Gen. Richard Secord.

When all of this was said and done and Congress finally got wind of it, hearings were held to discover just what went on. Many of us spent countless hours listening to these hearings on Public Radio. It seemed obvious that illegal activities took place and people were lying about what happened.

Now here is where things got confusing. Unlike Watergate — another example of presidents thinking that laws do not apply to them — there was no turncoat to break ranks like John Dean had done.

I guess they deserve some credit for taking the harder road. To have the pressure of prison placed over your head and not crack or betray your compatriots is indeed something. Of course, that is the kind of people they were.

I have read the autobiographies of both G. Gordon Liddy and Oliver North and have come to the conclusion that they were very similar. The

similarities are exactly the things that caused them, and others, to break the laws to further their own ends.

This is the crux of the issue.

Does the end justify the means? While there is great philosophical argument here, I will cut it short and say that the ends cannot justify the means.

In this instance the various laws were in place for a reason. The proper constitutional procedures were followed and these laws became the law of the land.

It is not the law for everyone, but a certain group of men who thought they knew better.

I guess I find this whole issue particularly upsetting because it is the conservatives who seem to maintain that the Constitution was written for a reason and must be interpreted as it was written. Well I thought that the Constitution said the executive branch has to follow the law.

The World-Herald editorial noted that laws were broken, but said that it was OK. I can't help but wonder whether the World-Herald thought it was OK for the Nixon administration to illegally tap government officials, or if the break-in at the Watergate complex could be written off because it served some higher purpose.

Again, do the ends justify the means? Even in international politics there must exist some semblance of order. A nation that thinks as highly of itself as does the United States should never lower itself to the level of other nations. Ever.

The World-Herald ended by stating, "To call their efforts a scandal is a gross misuse of the word." To legitimize illegal governmental activities is gross mistake.

Heckman is a graduate student in political science and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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