REVERIE ON CAMELOT
by Sue W. Miller

What were you doing in the morning on the 22nd of November 1963? I was teaching in a private school just off of Lemon Avenue in Dallas, Texas. Too young to vote, I had applauded the election of a young presidential candidate, John Kennedy, and his attractive wife, Jackie. As a recent college graduate, majoring in English, I was exposed to Camelot, a musical, a mystical production about the castle and Kingdom of Camelot, where an idyllic king and queen reveled in pomp and splendor and faced ultimate tragedy.

For me, that was the Kennedys. I'm older, now, and not so idealistic; I know that Camelot was a flawed vision of the, not so fairytale, Kennedys. But can't you imagine the excitement and anticipation of seeing in person the "Camelot Couple" riding down Lemon Avenue toward the School Book Depository only to fall into a tragedy better than Shakespeare could have devised?

While our classroom was preparing to walk to the parade, a 4th grade child asked me, "When can we leave?" rousing me from my ruminations. "Right now," I said, "Choose a walking partner and stay in touch with him or her." All these things settled, the whole school, sectioned by classroom, embarked on the trek to Lemon Avenue.

From this private Catholic School, we led the students carefully onto the sidewalk along Lemon Avenue. Soon the Presidential Cavalcade came by and Jackie's hot-pink pillbox hat and matching suit gave her an aura of a stylish aristocrat. President Kennedy (JFK) was next to her with his Cheshire-cat smile. At that point, I felt I was experiencing history.

Though I was protestant, I was teaching in a parochial school, so the children were doubly proud that JFK was Catholic, the first Catholic president to be elected in the United States.

As the cavalcade passed, volumes of applause erupted in the warm autumn air. Smiles and applause continued until the cavalcade was out

of sight. After the parade the students went back to school for lunch, I slipped out for an off-campus lunch.

As I returned to my classroom, I heard sobbing from every open door. In my classroom the students' heads were down and they were crying. Kennedy had been shot just minutes after we had cheered him along Lemon Avenue. We all thought that he was alive, just gravely injured. After school was over and I arrived home I witnessed on T.V. the shooting of Oswald, the assassin, by Mafia-related Jack Ruby. This day was a nightmare; something you might witness in a third-world country, not in the U.S.A. JFK lost his life that night.

Conspiracy theories abounded and government commissions were formed, all finally concluding that Oswald was working alone. However, polls conducted between 1996 and 2003 showed that 80% of Americans suspected that there was a plot or a cover-up. In my mind the question of conspiracy was never completely resolved. I believe that the many villains were connected and fear of mob reprisal kept it all quiet. When Bobby Kennedy, JFK's brother and the U.S. Attorney General, was assassinated a few years later, my suspicions were underscored. I believe that a vendetta was out on both of the slain Kennedys for their attacks on organized crime. I just wonder why the government would not acknowledge the likelihood or even the possibility of a conspiracy. When politicians try to clean up an illegal set-up that had been established for years, like the Mafia, wouldn't the Mafia's reprisal be logical?

Or, could Oswald have been a Russian agent? Not logical. How would the assassination of an American president by a Russian agent give any benefit to Russia? None.

We citizens have never been given a satisfactory explanation of the loss of Camelot, the assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy. Personally, I have had no closure on this event. What really happened in Camelot that fateful day? I will die with the vision burned in my brain of the beautiful Kennedys riding down Lemon Avenue in an open convertible on a sunny fall day, cheerful and unaware of the tragedy facing them just a few blocks away.
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