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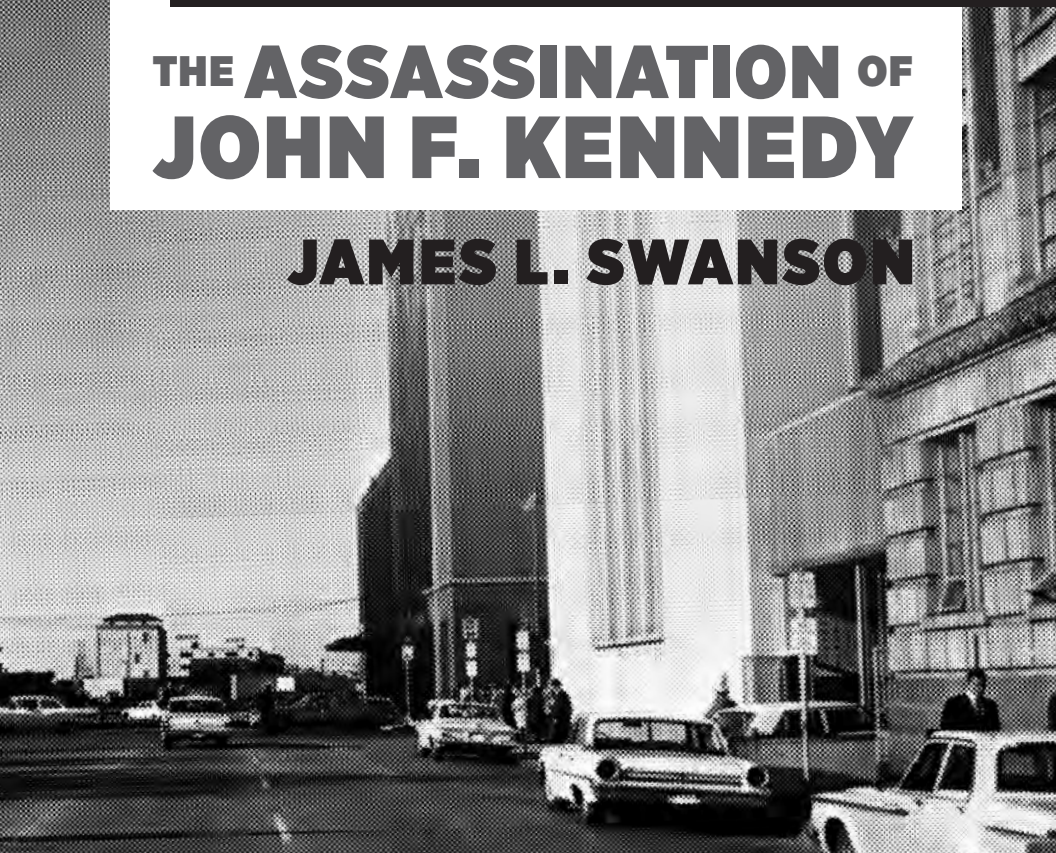
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# DENT HAS BEEN SHOT!"

THE ASSASSINATION OF  
JOHN F. KENNEDY

JAMES L. SWANSON





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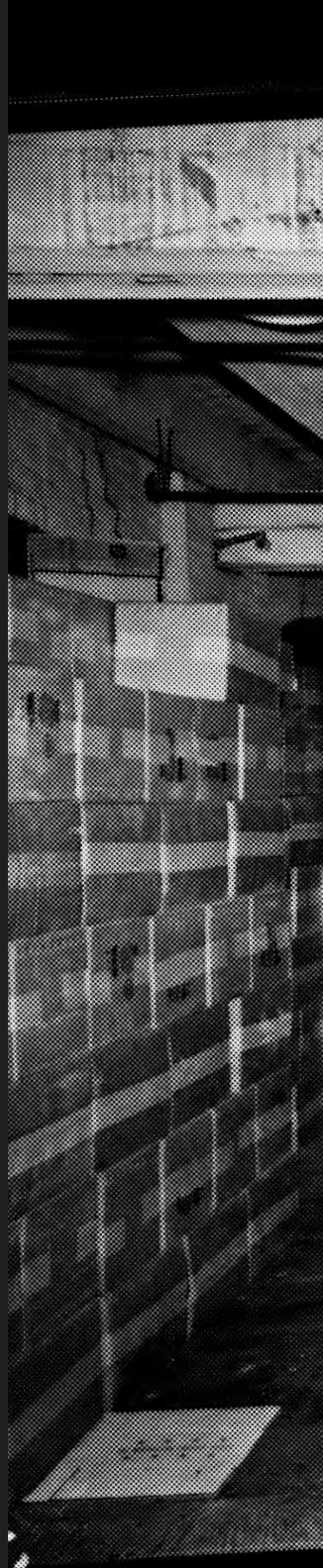
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# THE EARLY YEARS

John F. Kennedy remains the youngest man ever elected president of the United States. Born in Brookline, Massachusetts, in May 1917, the year America entered the First World War, young John had political blood in his veins. His maternal grandfather, John “Honey Fitz” Fitzgerald, had been a Democratic mayor of Boston. And his own father, Joseph P. Kennedy, served in President Franklin Roosevelt’s administration as ambassador to Great Britain in the years leading up to the Second World War. These achievements were great honors for an Irish Catholic family that had been treated as second-class citizens by the snobbish New England elite.

Joseph Kennedy was a self-made millionaire, and he raised his nine children—including four sons—in an atmosphere of wealth and privilege. Joseph Kennedy vowed that one day his eldest son, Joe Jr., would become the first Catholic president of the United States, and he prepared him for success. In World War II, Joe Jr. was a bomber pilot and served in Europe, fighting Nazi Germany.

John, Joseph’s second-eldest son, known as Jack to friends and family, became a navy lieutenant and served in the Pacific theater, fighting the Japanese. Jack commanded a PT boat, a small, fast craft with a wood hull that was designed to approach





The Kennedy family in 1931, including eight of the nine children. From left to right: Robert Kennedy, John F. Kennedy, Eunice Kennedy, Jean Kennedy (on lap of) Joseph P. Kennedy Sr., Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy (behind) Patricia Kennedy, Kathleen Kennedy, Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. (behind) Rosemary Kennedy. Edward Kennedy was not yet born.





John Kennedy (far right) during World War II aboard his boat, *PT-109*, with his crew.

much larger Japanese warships and attack them with torpedoes. Jack narrowly escaped death on August 2, 1943, when, at 2:30 in the morning, an enemy ship rammed and sliced his boat, *PT-109*, in half. Two of his twelve crewmen were killed, and he and several others were injured. In darkness, they clung to the wreckage that remained afloat. After it was light, Kennedy led his crew on a swim to a tiny, deserted island. One man, suffering from bad burns, could not make it. Jack refused to abandon him to die, so he clenched in his teeth a strap connected to the sailor's life jacket, and for four grueling hours, he towed the man behind him until they reached land. That night, although exhausted, Kennedy volunteered to swim out alone with the hope of sighting an American vessel that could rescue them. He planned to fire his revolver and signal with a flashlight. But no ship passed his way. After spending hours in the water, he returned the next day and collapsed on the beach.