

# Rough translation of the nominated JFK-stories of our readers

## **Mr Pieter Bakker, Haarlem, first price**

The assassination of John f. Kennedy

The Krelagehuis on the Leidsevaart was the basketball temple of Haarlem in the sixties. With the IJmond Stars from Velsen we play against an American team. They are soldiers of the air base in Soesterberg.

It's Friday night. November 22, 1963. It is 18.32 on the old clock of the flower auction-hall.

The second half is barely 30 seconds old. A power break from the middle. Aad Schipper steams forward over the left wing. I cut inside from the right. Get the ball from playmaker Kurt Lagerwey. I'm jumping for the lay-up. From a corner of my eye I see this giant of a yank jumping towards me. I push my shoulders into his belly. He makes a salto mortale over me. I slide on the back line with somersaults. The referees whistle echoes like a foghorn. The yank gasping for breath will receive his fourth P. I get up to take the free throws.

Straddle-legged I stand on the free throw line. The referee holds the ball and puts his arm on my shoulder to encourage me. Players line up around the bucket. These yanks are really very large. Physically and mentally strong guys. They grab every rebound from the air. All of the are big, around two meters. Only their sly playmaker is small: 1.75. Al we have is 1.80 meter guys and a pivot of 1.88 meter long. We must challenge them with our speed en try to keep the yanks as far as possible from the board. The man-to-man defense has so far proved effective. The referee hands the ball to me, points one finger into the air and whistles. I kiss the ball. Bounce it seven times. A ritual. Focus myself on "this one will go into the basket". I aim. Bend my knees, come up. My arms float with the ball up to the basket. The ball lands with a perfect parabola flawless in the ring. The net just gives a sigh. One point has been made. The score: 39-35. For us.

As a talented 17 year old I prepare for the second free throw. This would be a stunt to surprise these experienced Americans, I think. The time:

6: 35 pm hours, I see it on the clock. I love this game. Basketball. Most Beautiful sport there is. From the bench of the United States team then come noises. Their coach, in air force uniform, admonishes his players with nervous movements. There seems to be panic. Or is this psychological warfare?

Do they want to intimidate us and then come upon us as a sledge-hammer? There goes the whistle for a time out. The yanks seem to be really disappointed. There's got to be something special going on. We, the IJmond Stars, look at each other with big question marks in our eyes. Shuffle slowly to our bench. Our coach, Allan, talks to the Americans. Moments later he comes back to us. His hands in the air and a shattered look in his eyes. "Kennedy has been shot down".

The long hands on the clock in the Krelagehuis shock. A stifling wait fills the space. The Americans have direct telephone contact with their home base. More messages from Dallas drip inside the hall. There was a tour in Dallas with an open Ford Lincoln. Kennedy sat in it, his wife Jacky and John Connally, the Governor of Texas. There were shots from a building. The president is hit. Everybody is guessing about his condition. It seems a suspect has been caught. Someone has put on a transistor radio. We are around it and listen. On a wooden floor. With pale faces. It is 19.02. Dead Silent. Than those sobbing voice over the radio. "John f. Kennedy, the 35th president of the United States, is no more.

He succumbed to his injuries "

The Americans take a stance and give a military salute. I see tears. Feel them coming myself as well. The end of the game.

A dream of freedom had been destroyed. The world would never be the same again.

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## Mr Rene Corten, Houthem-St. Gerlach

I was the first to know ... ..

Probably I was the first in Maastricht that heard the news of the assassination of President Kennedy. How did that come about? November 22th 1963 I worked as a volunteer on the editorial staff of the New Limburger, then located at Wolfstraat in the city of Maastricht. My summer job was what we would now call a work experience post at the paper. I had to do my military service in February 1964 and so this was a useful occupation between my final school exam and the military. As a 19-year-old I earned 180 guilders a month with my job.

The editorial rooms above the offices of the newspaper made a big impression on me.

As a young boy I met more or less well-known figures as Lou Maas, an art critic, Mathieu Berden, columnist and other journalists. Editor-in-Chief was Mr. Kneplé to whom I showed some of my pieces as published in our school newspaper 'Palet'. I was allowed to come to the paper. My direct boss was Mr. Peeters, head of the domestic and foreign editors. A cheerful and amiable man with a blue Deux Chevaux who gave me a lift home after the night shift. He lived in Scharn. Number two on the editorial desk was someone called Kamphoven whom I knew vaguely from high school.

There was a night-and a day staff on the floor. That changed every week. You started the evening/night shift at about seven and then worked by up to an hour or three in the night.

On November 22, 1963, I was doing the nightshift. My task was to constantly monitor the news that came in on two enormous telex devices that were rattling non-stop in a sound proof booth. One was connected to the news agency United Press International (UPI) and the other Dutch news agency, ANP. With important news a bell rang. The messages were short and patchy. There was always some news added to previous posts. The messages came in on an endless long roll of paper that I had to tear from the telex from time to time. Those loose pieces of information had to be collected by me and finally processed into one coherent article.

As always Peeters and Camp would decide during the evening what would be tomorrow's headline news. Suddenly, just as my shift had started, the bell of the UPI-telex started ringing. I walked to the telex room and saw the title of the last telex: "assassination of President Kennedy in Dallas".

Back at the desks of the combined domestic and foreign desk I brought the news to my boss convinced that this would be the headlines of tomorrow.

Both Mr. Peeters and Mr. Kamphoven shrugged their shoulders. "Oh well," said Peeters, "here we go again. A few times every year UPI comes up with such a sensational message. Later on they will revoke it, you'll see." Moments later also the ANP-telex started ringing and that resulted in the full attention of all the editors. Also the local editors became involved now. We turned on the radio and there came this deluge of telex messages. Within half an hour things were buzzing at the newspaper's offices. There were not enough desks to work on because all the editorial members of the day shift had come back to work on obituaries, background articles, comments. Everyone was there: the columnists, all the editors. We were selecting press pictures for a photo page. The telexes rattled and rang constantly. Later in the evening I was put to work at the Department of correction where the first proofs in long columns were checked for typesetting and spelling errors. In the composing room Harry Lucassen did the page layout Harry Lapointe. I still see him and sometimes we remind ourselves on this legendary night. Around four o'clock the newspaper was fit to print. It was difficult to decide which moment really was the deadline because news did not stop coming from the telex. The first edition was completed. I was allowed in the basement where the huge rotation press stood and where a number of pages, still wet with printing ink were carefully read. Then it was time for a little party because we did it. Already during that night somebody had called to the Up Quelle bar not to close because the people of the new Limburger would be coming. We stayed there until the early morning. In a strange way we were happy because we had managed to make such a good newspaper but I remember having some difficulty with the euphoria. People drunk a lot and there was laughter because everybody had worked so hard. Our job was done, the newspapers were rolling from the press. I regret not to have kept that very first telex message.....

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## **Mrs. Vercoelen-Backman , Son**

Son, 31 August 2013-11-06

"The day Kennedy was killed"

November 22, 1963, in the evening at 20: 00 was our son Rudy born at St. Joseph Hospital in Eindhoven. Doctors and nurses congratulated us with the birth of our beautiful, healthy baby. We were very happy with it and intensely proud parents. Then my husband and a nurse took the baby to his cot on the Maternity Department. Upon return I was told that the message got around that President John F. Kennedy had been assassinated. This was news that shook the world. Everyone knew the President of the United States. The people in the hospital were shocked, stunned and in disbelief. Every anniversary of our son our thoughts go back to 1963 to this event. 22 November has a very double meaning to me: I am happy and fortunate that my son 50 will be years and there is great grief for half a century in America now to the loss of their beloved President.

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## **Louise Platje-Aalders, Arnhem**

The thirteen-year-old that I was can, even after 50 years, still remember where I was and what I was doing the day that President Kennedy died.

I was with my brothers and sisters home alone. My parents were visiting friends.

My older brothers were upstairs. I was alone in the living room and listening to the news on the radio. It was a, as it then was called, a distribution radio.

In that period there were many attacks on political leaders in Africa. I first thought that a president from Africa had been killed, before they mentioned the name of the victim.

To my horror and amazement it was John F. Kennedy that had been assassinated. I ran upstairs to tell my brothers. They would not believe me. "You surely did not hear it correctly", they said. But then they also listened to the news and it was indeed Kennedy. First we all hoped that Kennedy would only be injured. But this was not to be.

With help of my mother I have sent a condolence letter to Jacqueline Kennedy. I got a thank-you note with picture back. I still have this note in my possession.

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## **Richard and Jopie van As, Arnemuïden**

Our story about J.F.Kennedy.

After a long and very turbulent period of engagement we decided after seven years to get married on November 22, 1963.

Even on that day it was very bad weather with storm etc.

We had rented a room, paid for drinks, the reception, and dinner.

A two men band played dance music. This was suddenly interrupted because we were told that Kennedy was murdered around 8 o'clock.

There was a shock for everyone and a setback for both of us and the party-goers. There were also two Americans with us who began to scream that World War III was now eminent and there were more idiotic calls.

I told my twee men band just to play louder, because it is was still our wedding party.

Tomorrow and later we can grieve over that great loss. That is what we did and what we still do. You will grieve too, I think.

We are going to celebrate the anniversary of our wedding on November 22th.

Friendly greetings from RICHARD and JOPIE VAN AS.

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## **Hennie Ardesch, Enschede**

As professional player for the former Sportclub Enschede we heard of the assassination of the President of the United States during our training with the selection. We trained on what still is the training field of the club. We walked along behind the goal which if you stand in the middle for the ground is the on the right. A spectator called to us that Kennedy had been assassinated and then there were all kinds of discussion between us, the players, about the possible consequences of this murder. It was most impressive and I never forget, even now as I am entering the ground I always look at that goal where I stood 50 years ago. Am after my professional career I played there as an amateur and once stopped a penalty kick goal against Rietvogels. Also because of that win we won the title of the 2nd class and eventually promoted further.

The most impressive for me will remain in 1967 the visit to Dallas. With the team of ADO The Hague we visited the site where the president was killed. This was during a football introduction tour in the United States of America. We were there with 16 European teams and we were the representatives of San Francisco and played out in Dallas.

I still have a little statue of President Kennedy with pencil sharpener that I bought in Dallas.

# Rough translation of the nominated JFK-stories of our readers

## Jan Frankevijsle, Oosterhout, second price

### THE DAY KENNEDY DIED

For more than two months I attended the Klein Seminarie Ypelaar in Breda (in those days it was still called the municipality of Nieuw Ginneken.) Twelve years I was. Transplanted from the Zeeuws-Flemish countryside. I had to get used to everything except at being Catholic. Because that I was since I was born in 1951. And not just a bit Catholic. We were raised home Roman Catholic at home. And Roman Catholic you were from head to toe and from early morning until late at night. Seven days a week. There was no escape. Never. Not one minute.

There was great joy at our home when in 1960 John F Kennedy was elected president of the United States. My father read the news from the newspaper to me and my sisters. And proud that he was. "Children", he said with solemn voice, "this is the first Catholic president of the United States". Then he paused and looked around the table with a look as if he himself was the Pope and wanted to say: "Do understand the meaning of this: C-A-T-H-O-L-I-C". My sisters and I did not get the real importance of his statement but what stuck was that this had to be something important for Catholics.

That for winning that election the Kennedy's had done about everything that God, through the Roman Catholic doctrine of those days, had forbidden to us, I learned only much later. That knowledge I did not have on the very day I heard the news that John F Kennedy was assassinated. It was as if a bomb had fallen on Ypelaar. Where on a normal day everyone in the recreation room would be cheerful with table tennis or table football, there was now a subdued silence that prevailed. Groups of students only spoke about the assassination of president Kennedy. Or rather on the murder of a **Catholic** president.

Ypelaar was more than a small seminar. It turned out to be a great education, I discovered later. It was more than just a high school. Why? Because more was done than teaching. If there was something of interest going on in society, this was included as conversation topic in the lessons of the day. For instance, I remember vividly the discussions about the invasion of the Russians in the Czech Republic-Slovakia, the occupation of the Maagdenhuis, the emergence of Provo and so on. There was something of a paradox in this method of teaching. After all, there was constantly hammering on discipline, obedience, severity of the Catholic teaching and everything that went with it, but at the same time you were stimulated and provoked a bit think about those things that were not at all provided in the learnings of the church.

Of course, the death of Kennedy became the topic of conversation during all lessons. Kennedy's assassination was discussed during the religious class. I asked the officiating priest-teacher how something like a murder of a Catholic president, (there it is again), would be possible. Yet we had a last Catholic president in the most powerful country in the world; the world could finally benefit from his Catholic ideas and then God (of whom I was 100% sure knew He was Catholic) does nothing and just let somebody kill the one and only Catholic president of the United States.

There was something very wrong here, was my reasoning. Or this God of ours had been sleeping or Kennedy had sinned and therefore God did not mind that he was killed. I was waiting for the teacher to give me an appropriate response.

That appropriate response did not come. There came a sort of vague explanation which gave me no satisfaction at all. With a tenacity of a later famous Dutch journalist, Marcel van Dam, I kept on asking. At my third effort I was friendly invited to leave the classroom and sign in to the regent (read: rector) of Ypelaar, Mr De Lepper.

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For a student was no greater fear than having to report to the regent. From day one we were warned for this by senior students. You had to see to stay away from De Lepper. Hell and damnation was promised to you. Going to the regent was the worst thing could happen to you as a freshman seminarian. Later I learned how an erudite and extremely well-read and intellectual man Jan de Lepper actually was but that day in November 1963 my knees were weak when I shuffled through the long, dark hallway to his room. I hardly dared knocking on his door. After three or four attempts I heard from behind the other side of the door a sound: 'come in'. Knowing I was somehow guilty, I stepped inside. He asked me why I had to report on which I told him what had happened during the religious instruction, including my question. He looked at me severely and repeated, aloud, one more time my question. He thought it was a good question, he said. I could not believe my ears. I was prepared for anything, a thunder sermon, and piles of punishment, perhaps a temporary suspension or, the worst scenario, a "consilium abeundi". But I was not prepared for this.

There was something mild in his voice when he told me that he understood my question. He pointed out to me that not everything in life can be understood. Certainly not if you've only twelve years old, like me. Later when I was older and had studied (theology) I would be able to answer some those questions himself, he told me. I nodded in agreement as my father had taught me. However, I could not fail to ask if God had done better if he had let the Soviet leader Khrushchev killed that day. The regent had to a warm laugh and said, "no, God does not handle these matters" and then he asked me to leave his room.

And there I was again in that long, dark hallway. Without punishment, without thunder sermon, without suspension. I was relieved but also disappointed. Because what good is a God who does not even protect his own followers? Then you might just as well have no God at all. That day my faith began its first identity crisis and that night I lost my calling as a priest, I think.

Now is the Kennedy assassination (nearly) 50 years behind us. Fifty years of looking back, I can only conclude that the day Kennedy died has been decisive for my further life. I never overcame the beginning of my crisis of faith. I have also not become a priest and I have left the church far behind me. I'm now humanist and I feel very good at that. And all that because on that day in November when Kennedy died in 1963. And..... because he was Catholic. And I was one as well.

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## Tineke van Buren, Hellendoorn

November 1963. I was 14 years old.

On the evening of November the 22th, I was babysitting at my brothers and sister in law. Their 6-month old son, my nephew, was sleeping and I was watching television.

It was a very quiet evening.

Suddenly there was an extra news broadcast with the announcement that president Kennedy was shot.

I got a fright!

He was so loved. I was a great fan of him, but who wasn't a fan of that President.

On my bedroom wall were pictures of him next to those of Cliff Richard, Rex Gildo.

Later on that night, when my brother was at home already, we heard the news that Kennedy had died from injuries. We felt defeated.

Then November the 25<sup>th</sup> came.

I went to school by eight o'clock. My girlfriend who always came to pick me up did not come. Strange! Maybe she overslept, I thought.

So that Monday morning I cycled to school on my own. When I arrived at school I was told there were no lessons the first three hours. That is why my girlfriend did not come to pick me up. So I went home and started doing my homework for the next day. (How dutifully)

Then the phone rang.

I heard my mother crying: no, it can't be true.

I was terrified.

A very bad thing had happened.

My grandpa.

Early that morning he had gone to an hospital for an examination. When he was overtaking a car he had a head-on collision with a truck.

My grandpa died instantly.

What a sadness in our family and in our town. He was so loved and so an active person in our community. Next day, in the newspaper, there were, on one page, a photo of president Kennedy and a picture of the crashed car with the message that Mr. Frederik van Buren from Hellendoorn had died in the carcrash.

Both my heroes on one page. Both dead.

I kept that newspaper during all these years. Now I will look it up and show it to my heroes of today: my children and grandchildren.

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## **Joke van Gils, Loon op Zand, thirth price**

I remember Friday November 22<sup>nd</sup> 1963 perfectly well. I was 14 years and got up early that day. It was restless in house because that evening there would be a TV. In our neighborhood, de Noordhoek in Tilburg, only a few people had one. A TV was expensive in those days and cost a thousand guilders. The TV-set was a gift from our grandmother to my father. He was suffering a heart disease for some years. In the summer of 1962 he underwent surgery, which revealed that he had poorly functioning heart valves what was caused by a bacterial infection. There was nothing to do, he was unable to work more because he was uneducated worker, he had had a job with the freight carrier Van Gend & Loos. Grandma took pity on my father, her son, he had nothing more than sitting idle. She was very happy with her own television set and so bought a second hand for my father to give him something to do.

The device was delivered at the beginning of the evening by a few men with a van. They placed an antenna on the roof and the TV was installed in the front room on a special table. It was quite a herremiejee (a lot of hassle) before the antenna took the signal. When we finally had images we suddenly witnessed the assassination of John f. Kennedy. My brother Frans and I, we were the two eldest children and therefore still awake, were very disappointed. We could not see the TV-series where we had so much hoped for. What series that was I don't remember, not Bonanza, because that came on Tuesday, I think – NOTE DPD: THIS IS WRONG MANY READER REMEBERED THEIR DISAPPOINTMENT THAT BONANZA, THE SECOND EPISODE WAS SHOWN IN THE NETHERLANDS, WAS CANCELLED. My parents were impressed by the attack and they were amazed that they could witness an act which was committed on the other side of the ocean, as if it had happened in our own street.

The atmosphere at home changed. The TV soon got a more prominent place in the back room, where the stove was burning. I made my homework in the kitchen instead of in the living room. My mother sat there still often sewing behind her Singer-sewing machine. I still remember the whirling sound, the wheel that turned ever more rapidly while the greedy machine devoured the tissue. I remember also the soft women voices from the TV in the background.

The day that JFK was assassinated became a turning point in our lives, that change was not caused by the murder but because we could see what happened on the other side of the world. The black and white TV became the homely altar that replaced the Church altar. Via the new medium social and ecclesiastical developments entered our living room. We saw what happened, learned different culture forms global common, were introduced to the Olympic Games and were informed about things we had never heard of it. The TV ended the closed security of the Catholic community where I had been at home and opened a different world.

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