

EPILOGUE

AFTER JOHN F. KENNEDY WAS BURIED and Lyndon Johnson took over as president, I began hearing a lot about Vietnam. Some of what I heard came from TV reports about the war and the demonstrations against it. By senior year in high school, older boys I knew from the neighborhood began coming back from Vietnam. Some came home injured. Some came home with altered personalities. I talked to some of them, and they each said the same thing: Vietnam was chaos; there was nothing good about it. I was about to graduate and maybe get drafted. Their stories scared me.

I went to college and so was deferred from the draft. It seemed like a good thing to do, and I studied and played sports, determined to stay in school. There was time for a few extra activities, so I started writing for the college newspaper, *The Circle*. That made me pay attention to politics more closely. But my heroes continued to be men who played sports: Willie Mays, the legendary Giants center fielder, and Jim Brown of the Cleveland Browns.

In 1969, my junior year in college, I joined a year-abroad program and went to London, England. Every day of that trip opened my eyes more. I was no longer just a suburban boy. I saw places I had only read about in textbooks. As a history major, that trip was like a candy store.

But one part of that year in Europe really made me who I am today. At the time, people all over the world were upset and angry with Americans, some because of Vietnam and others simply because they did not like our political system or the way we act: big, bold, and vocal. Kids made fun of my accent (New York), of American television shows (*American*

Bandstand), and of my preoccupation with following that strange American game (football).

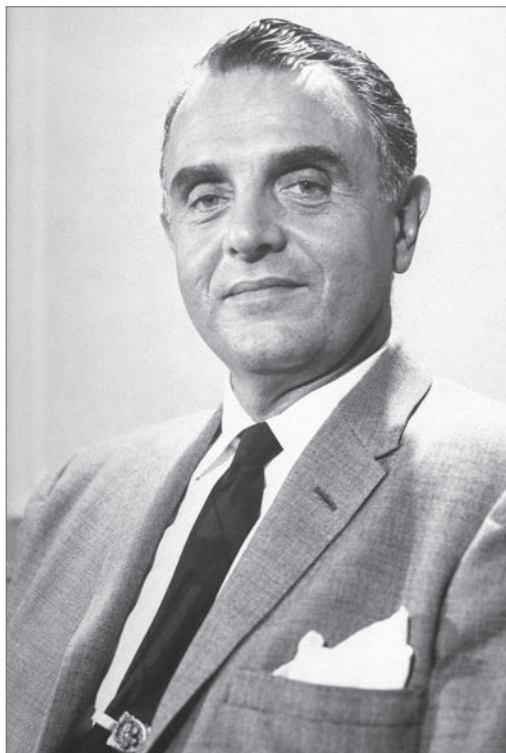
To this day, I can recall the feelings I had that year when people made fun of the U.S.A. All that anti-Americanism made me think a lot about pride and loyalty. I realized that I love my country fiercely even though it's not perfect, and believe strongly in our system of government.

After college, I had to find a way to use my history major in a way that I hoped might help people. Warm, sunny Miami, Florida, was the location of a high school teaching job. It was tough, but I lasted two years, and think I did an okay job presenting kids with both sides of lots of issues in history. Then I started on the journey that has led to my television success today. Like most career paths, mine started small in places like Scranton, Pennsylvania; Denver, Colorado; and Dallas, Texas.

In 1977, I was an investigative reporter for WFAA-TV in Dallas. The Kennedy assassination was in the news again. The House of Representatives was investigating both the Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. assassinations



The author heads to England and beyond.



George de Mohrenschildt in 1964.

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again to see if there was evidence of conspiracy in either tragedy. When I looked at the story, I saw some loose ends. One was George de Mohrenschildt, the Russian-American businessman who had befriended the Oswalds.



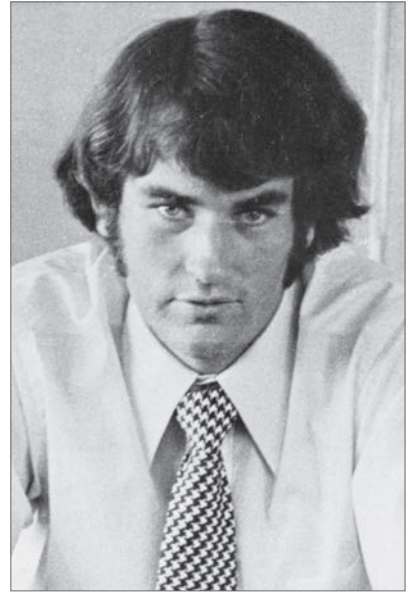
I tracked him down at his daughter's home in Florida. By some awful coincidence, the day I went to see him there, he had also gotten a request to be interviewed by the House Committee on Assassinations. As I knocked on the door, I heard a shotgun blast. He had killed himself. Later, the chairman of the House committee said de Mohrenschildt was a "crucial witness." I often wonder what I might have been able to find out. To this day, his relationship to Lee Harvey Oswald is not fully understood.

Over the years, my list of personal heroes has developed. I have looked at our country's history and paid close attention to people who tried to protect the United States and change it for the good and to people who took on huge world problems alone or with little help: Abraham Lincoln, who ended the Civil War and forced the country to stay united; Franklin Roosevelt, who led the country through the Great Depression and World War II; Mother Teresa, who devoted her life to tackling the dire poverty in the slums of Calcutta, India; Bono, who champions the civil rights and social causes of Africans; and Bobby Kennedy,

who used the power of his office as U.S. attorney general to further the cause of civil rights.

In 1966, Bobby Kennedy said,

Few will have the greatness to bend history itself; but each of us can work to change a small portion of the events, and in the total of all those acts will be written the history of this generation. . . . It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is thus shaped. Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.



The author as a first-year teacher in Miami.

He was echoing the meaning of one of John Fitzgerald Kennedy's favorite quotes. It's from a poem by Dante, who lived in Italy in the Middle Ages: "The hottest places in Hell are reserved for those who in time of moral crisis preserve their neutrality."

Today, I take those words to heart. If I see injustice, I say something. As you think about John Fitzgerald Kennedy, I hope that you will appreciate the ways in which he tried to bend history. He was president for only 1,036 days. Who knows what he might have accomplished if he had lived? His death filled the country with sorrow because he represented a grand American vision of pride, fairness, and service to one's country.