

# MEMORY

It was a dull, dull meeting. It seemed it had gone on forever and my attention wandered as I gazed out the window. This work meeting was on the 5th floor of the old Sick Children's Hospital, a red sandstone castle-like building at 67 College Street in Toronto. The building was a rabbit warren of wards made into offices and housed the branch of the Ministry of Health I was working in.

I don't remember the subject being labouriously discussed but it probably had to do with permitting cottage development on the rocky northern lakesides and on the 30,000 Islands dotting Georgian Bay. Some would argue that only dug privies should be allowed, others that if soil was trucked or boated in the septic tanks and tile beds would be possible.

The usual group of participants were at the meeting. The Director, leading the discussion and encouraging everyone to put forward their point of view. The silent pensive looking guy that never said anything sat with his chin in his hands. Everyone initially thought he was a great thinker, but soon realized that he was just too dumb to really grasp any serious subject matter. There were the young engineers trying to out theorize the older engineers and the technical people trying to impress the boss with their erudition. Last but not least the guy who would listen to all the ideas put forward, sort out the ones he thought the boss wanted to hear and present them as his own. A typical day, a typical meeting and generally a typical waste of time.

Soon, however, the Director summed up and signalled the end of the meeting. I left as quickly as I could and headed for the general office.

This was a large room and housed all the clerk-typists, stenos and clerical support staff. I rushed into the room but stopped almost immediately. There was a radio playing, in itself most unusual, with some commentator speaking and each of the staff staring in shocked disbelief. Some had tears streaming down their cheeks and one young woman had her head on her arms on her desk and her body was racked with sobs.

I hesitated but then said to the nearest woman, "what's wrong Mary?" Her voice broke as she replied "President Kennedy has been shot in Dallas". She dissolved into tears and I could only croak "is he okay?" "No" she blubbered "he's dead".

For the next long period of days and weeks we stayed glued to our radios or TVs trying to come to grips with this outrageous destruction of Camelot, the murder of the leader who we thought would bring the changes needed

to a world tired of old style elitism, crass politics and racial tensions.

The murder on T.V. of Lee Harvey Oswald before he could be interrogated and the Warren Commission Report which appears to be grossly flawed, led the world into cynicism and the young of America into a revolt against their Country's ideals or lack thereof. It is a day I will always remember; November 22, 1963.

A few mornings ago I was in Bloomfield to pick up my bread from Rosemary's Bakery. I was returning home with the radio on CBC (98.7) and was only half listening when I caught the tail end of a comment about a plane crashing into the World Trade Centre.

She must be reviewing a science fiction or a Tom Clancy novel I thought. But it soon became obvious that it was a real live broadcast by a CBC reporter from New York city. I quickly drove home and in mindless shock and disbelief stared as CNN brought the horror into our home.

What can I say that you haven't already seen or heard. I share the grief with the rest of the world, greatly admire the sacrifice, resoluteness and heroism of the survivors and those who risked and even gave their lives attempting to save others. What's going to happen? Who knows at this stage as the world slowly develops its plans

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