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# The Road to the John F. Kennedy Presidency

★ *The 35th President* ★

## John Fitzgerald Kennedy: The Early Years



Father and Sons, 1919. Joseph P. Kennedy holds J.P. Jr. and 2 year old J.F.K. (right).\*



1931 Family Portrait at Hyannis Port. From left: Bobby, Jack, Eunice, Jean, Joseph Sr., Rose with Pat in front of her, Joe Jr., & Rosemary.\*

*"If we cannot now end our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity." -John F. Kennedy*

The 35th President of the United State of America, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, was born May 29, 1917 to parents, Rose Fitzgerald and Joseph Patrick Kennedy in Brookline, Massachusetts. Kennedy, born as the second oldest of nine children-Jean, Robert, Patricia, Eunice, Kathleen, Rosemary, and Joe, Jr.-descended from Irish forebears and received a name in honor of Rose's father, John Francis Fitzgerald. Shortly after his birth, friends and family called Kennedy, "Jack." Kennedy grew up under the teachings of the Catholic Church and in a family that enjoyed physical and intellectual competition. His father often said, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going."<sup>1</sup> Kennedy experienced a lot of sickness as a child -whooping cough, measles, chicken pox, and spent a month in the hospital with scarlet fever. Despite his unhealthy childhood, he filled his younger years with sports and games and summers in the family's summer home in Hyannis Port on Cape Cod where they enjoyed swimming, sailing, and playing touch football. Both of Kennedy's grandfathers were prominent Boston politicians, and his

<sup>1</sup> Weidman, Lisan and Shea, Ellen. "A Biography of John F. Kennedy: The 35th President of the United States." John F. Kennedy Library and Museum. n.pag. Online. Internet. 18 September 2003. Available:



John F. Kennedy on sailboat at family's summer home in Hyannis Port, Ma.\*

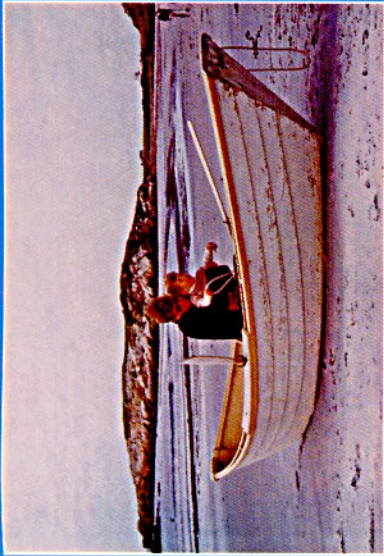
father a successful businessperson. Kennedy attended private elementary schools and a boarding school in high school. He spent a year at Canterbury School in New Milford, Connecticut and four years at Choate, a boarding school for boys in Wallingford, Connecticut. At Choate, Kennedy played tennis, basketball, football, and golf, had many friends, and was nominated "most likely to succeed" by his classmates.

Upon graduation in 1935, he spent his summer studying at the London School of Economics before attending Princeton University the following fall. Kennedy left Princeton during Christmas break due to an attack of jaundice. In the fall of 1936, he enrolled at Harvard University where he studied government. While at Harvard, Kennedy injured his back playing junior varsity football-an injury that ultimately led to future back operations. During Kennedy's time at Harvard, his father served as ambassador to Britain, thus Kennedy enjoyed trips to Europe where he stayed at American embassies and spoke to newspapermen, political leaders, and diplomats. Taking in what he learned

\* John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library, Boston

\* Cecil Stoughton, White House/John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library, Boston

## John Fitzgerald Kennedy: The Presidential Years



John F. Kennedy and little John in boat. <sup>2</sup>

in Europe, he wrote an honor thesis his senior year at Harvard analyzing the British policies that led to the Munich Pact of 1938. Kennedy graduated cum laude from Harvard and published his thesis as a book under the title, *Why England Slept* in 1940. In 1940 and 1941, he studied a few months at Stanford University Graduate School of Business and toured Latin America before he volunteered for the Army in 1941 - a time during which the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and the U.S. entered World War II. The Army rejected his entrance because of his weak back, and he consequently gained acceptance into the Navy in September 1941 after spending the summer doing strengthening exercises for his back. In March 1943, he took command of the PT-109 (torpedo boat) in the Solomon Islands as lieutenant<sup>1</sup> with a mission to stop enemy Japanese ships from delivering supplies to their soldiers. A Japanese destroyer rammed and sunk Kennedy's boat the night of August 2, 1943. Despite being thrown across the deck and further injuring his back, Kennedy led the survivors of his crew to a nearby

<sup>2</sup>Robert Knudsen, *White House/John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library*, Boston



Senator John F. Kennedy in his Senate Office, circa 1958/59. <sup>\*</sup>



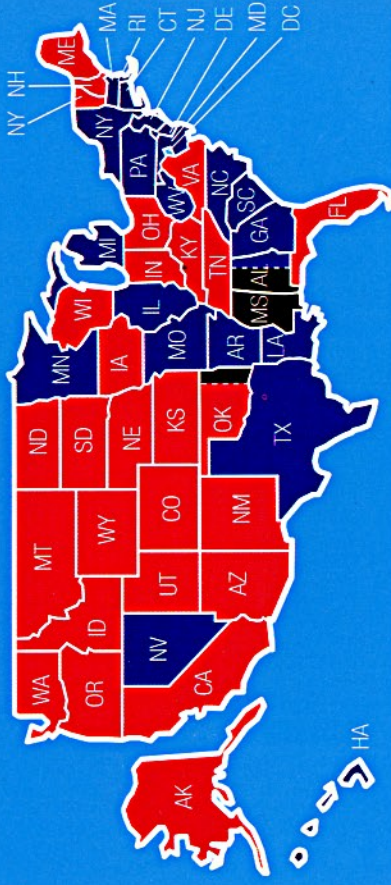
J.F.K. family photo at Hyannis Port in Summer of 1962. <sup>1</sup>

island while towing a wounded man 3 miles through the seas. Kennedy swam for days trying to find a rescue ship, and finally encountered two islanders, whom he gave a coconut carved with a message that requested the rescue of his crew. While in the South Pacific, Kennedy contracted malaria and underwent a back operation upon his return. He received the Purple Heart and the Navy and Marine Corps Medal for his leadership and courage before the Navy discharged him in 1945 because of his back injury.

After his discharge, Kennedy considered a career, not in law as he stated in his Harvard College yearbook, but as a teacher or writer and worked for several months in 1945 as a reporter for the Hearst newspapers, covering the conference at San Francisco that established the United Nations. Kennedy did not aspire to get into politics until after his brother Joe died in World War II. Joe Jr. had announced early on that he would be the first Catholic president of the United States. At the urging of his father, Kennedy took on

<sup>3</sup>U.S. Army, Signal Corps/John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library.

# The Presidential Election 1960



(R) Nixon state victories: 219 - 40.75%    Electoral votes total: 537  
 (D) Kennedy state victories: 303 - 56.5%    Popular vote total:  
 (I) Byrd state victories: 15 - 2.75%    68,836,385

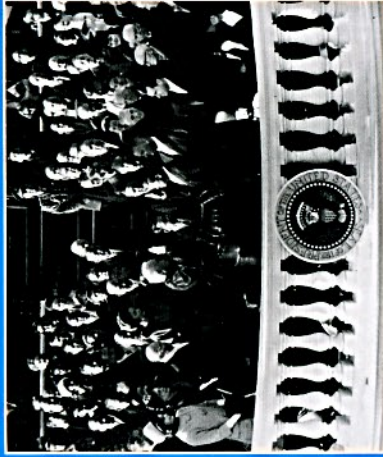
However, four years later he won the Democratic nomination for the President of the United States. Kennedy won the 1960 election by a margin of 119,450 votes and an electoral vote of 303 against Republican Richard Nixon and became the first Roman Catholic and youngest president elected to the United States of America at the age of 43.\*\* Kennedy's domestic program, known as the 'New Frontier' focused on tax reform, federal aid to education, civil rights expansion, medical care for aged under Social Security, aid to depressed areas, and an accelerated space program. John F. Kennedy took on his brother's early ambitions and took oath as the 35th President of the United States of America on January 20, 1961.

Sadly, President John F. Kennedy only served as President of the United States of America until Friday, November 22, 1963 when Lee Harvey Oswald, a 24-year old marine, assassinated Kennedy at the age of 46.

\*\* Roosevelt is actually the youngest president inaugurated into office at the age of 42, yet he obtained his first term without election.



President John F. Kennedy holds his first news conference five days after taking office.<sup>4</sup>



At age 43, John F. Kennedy takes the oath of office and becomes the 35th President of the U.S.A., January 20, 1961.<sup>3</sup>

his brother's early ambitions and started a career in politics. In 1946, Kennedy ran and won a seat in Massachusetts' eleventh congressional district. He served 3 terms (6 years) in the House of Representatives before winning the U.S. Senate election in 1952. In 1953, Kennedy married Jacqueline Bouvier on September 12 in Newport, Rhode Island. The Kennedys' shared two children who survived infancy-Caroline Bouvier, born on November 27, 1957, and John, Jr., born on November 25, 1960. Patrick Bouvier died two days after his birth on August 7, 1963.

Kennedy gained the opportunity to fulfill his aspirations to be a writer when he had two back operations in October 1954 and February 1955. Kennedy used his recovery time to write a book about several U.S. Senators, *Profiles in Courage*, which gained him a Pulitzer Prize for Biography in 1957. This same year, Kennedy also gained membership to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. The previous year, in 1956, Kennedy aimed toward higher office when he ran for and lost the vice-presidential nomination.

<sup>4</sup> Abbie Rowe, National Park Service/John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library, Boston

## John F. Kennedy: While in Office

**1961** Peace Corps established • Alliance for Progress between United States and Latin America signed • 23rd Amendment adopted • Social Security Bill signed • \$1.25 minimum wage bill • Project Apollo proposed • First Federal program to combat juvenile delinquency • Berlin wall built • Bay of Pigs Invasion by American-backed Cuban exiles unsuccessful • United Nations General Assembly condemns apartheid in South Africa • JFK and Nikita Khrushchev held a summit in Vienna • South Vietnam signed military and economic aid treaty with United States • Disarmament Agency established **1962** Trade Expansion Act passed • United States Steel Corporation rescinded a 3.5% increase in prices due to urging from Kennedy • Bill signed allowing construction of World's largest atomic power plant • Executive order preventing racial discrimination in Federal housing • U.S. establishes military council in South Vietnam • Formation of the United States Military Assistance Command • USSR sends arms to Cuba, setting off the "Cuban Missile Crisis" with the U.S. • United States naval and air quarantine on all offensive weapons bound for Cuba • Soviet Union announced it's dismantle and with-draw of its offensive weapons in Cuba • Communist Chinese invaded northern border of India • United States authorized air-lifting of arms to India • United Nations bond issue bill **1963** Nuclear test ban treaty between United States and Soviet Union • U.S.-backed group overthrows the government of South Vietnam and replaces it with a military dictatorship • Tax reduction and tax reform proposed • Alabama National Guard mobilized to admit two African Americans to University of Alabama • Civil Rights legislation proposed • Kennedy assassinated in Dallas, Texas November 22 • Lyndon B. Johnson becomes president

## John F. Kennedy: Key Establishments

• Peace Corps established (1961) • 23rd Amendment adopted • Minimum Wage Increase in 1961 to \$1.15 and in 1963 to \$1.25 • Work hours act: Standard 8 hr work day/40 hour work week with time and half for overtime • Trade Expansion Act of 1962 • 1st U.S. astronaut orbits the earth • Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (1963) btw U.S., Britain, and Soviet Union • Proposed decrease in income taxes and Civil Rights legislation that Congress passed after his death

## John F. Kennedy: Personal Trivia

**Presidential number:** 35th **Years President:** 1961-63 **Terms:** 1  
**Party Affiliation:** Democrat **State Represented:** Massachusetts **First Lady:** Jacqueline L. Bouvier Kennedy **Vice President:** Lyndon B. Johnson  
**Birthday:** May 29, 1917 **Birthplace:** Brookline, Massachusetts **Birth name:** John Fitzgerald Kennedy **Parents:** Rose Fitzgerald and Joseph Patrick Kennedy **Nickname:** Jack, JFK **Childhood Activities:** Swimming, sailing, tennis, basketball, golf, football, reading **Favorite Childhood Book:** *King Arthur and His Knights* **Favorite Subjects:** History and English **Education:** Choate School, London School of Economics, Princeton University (one semester), Harvard University, Stanford University Graduate School of Business  
**Professions:** Lieutenant in U.S. Navy, Journalist, Writer, Congressman, U.S. Senator of Massachusetts, 35th President of the United States of America  
**Religion:** Roman Catholic **Hobbies/Sports:** Sailing, Swimming, Reading, and Football **Favorite Foods:** New England Clam Chowder **Children:** Caroline Bouvier, John Fitzgerald Jr. and Patrick Bouvier **Pets:** Ponies **Died:** November 22, 1963

## John F. Kennedy: Notable Facts

**Only president** to be Roman Catholic. **Youngest president** to be elected. **First president** who had served in U.S. Navy. **First president** to hold a press conference on television. **Only president** to appoint their brother to a cabinet post. **First president** to be a Boy Scout. **First president** born in the 20th Century. **First president** to ask Congress to approve 22 billion dollars for space: Project Apollo. **Only president** to have been survived by both of his parents.

## John F. Kennedy: The Time Line

**1917**

Born in Brookline, Massachusetts on May 29th to Rose Fitzgerald and Joseph Patrick Kennedy.

**1929**

Stock market crash in October triggered the Great Depression.

**1927**

Kennedy family moved to Riverdale, N.Y.

**1931**

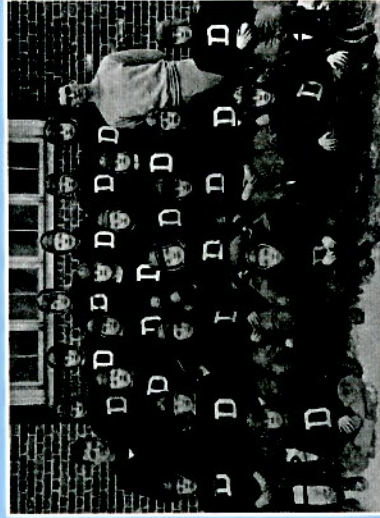
Enrolled in Choate boarding school. Played tennis, basketball, football, and golf.

**1936**

Attended Harvard University. Participated in varsity football, golf, hockey.

**1937**

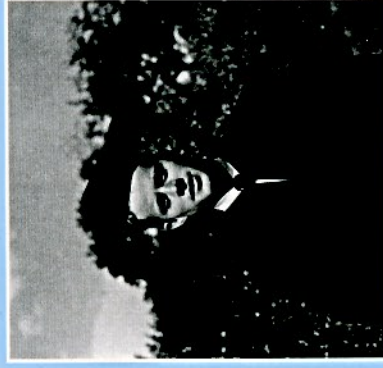
Joseph Kennedy



The Dexter school football team in Brookline, Ma. Jack Kennedy at age 10 (ground, front right) and older brother Joe (behind, third from left)\*



John F. Kennedy, portrait of young Jack at 11 years old, 1926\*



Choate Graduate (prep school in Connecticut), class of 1935. Voted "most likely to succeed".\*

**1920**

Sick with Scarlet fever for a month. Family moved few blocks away from old house.

**1935**

Graduated from Choate, ranked 64th in a class of 100. Spent summer studying at the London School of Economics. Attended Princeton and then dropped out due to ill health.

**1938**

\* John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library, Boston

**1940**

Wrote senior thesis and it is published as a book under the title *Why England Slept*.  
Graduated Cum Laude from Harvard.

**1940-41**

Stanford University Graduate School of Business.  
Toured Latin America.

**1941**

Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor December 7th and the U.S. entered World War II.  
Entered the U.S. Navy.

softball, swimming, and St. Paul's Catholic club.  
y Sr. is named ambassador to Great Britain.

**1943**

Japanese destroyer sinks Kennedy's PT boat  
on August 2nd.

**1944**

Received the Purple Heart  
Entered Boston's

**1939**

(September) Outbreak of WWII in Europe (1939-1945).

**38-39**

Winter 1938-Summer 1939: Toured Europe.

2 and voted "Most likely to Succeed".  
comics.  
ss.



Lt. John F. Kennedy on Navy PT 109 in the South Pacific, 1942-1943 \*



John F. Kennedy received Navy medal for Gallantry in Action June

**1942-43**

Served on and commanded a Navy PT (torpedo) boat in the South Pacific.

John F. Kennedy and the Marine Corps Medal. Brother Joseph Kennedy Jr. killed while flying a mission over Europe.  
Chelsea Naval Hospital with a lower back condition.

**1945**

Discharged from the Navy March 1st.  
Worked as a reporter for the Hearst newspaper.

**1948**

Elected to a second term in the House.  
Diagnosed with Addison's Disease.

**1950**

The era of "McCarthyism."  
Elected to a third term in the House.

**1953**

Married Jacqueline Bouvier September 12th.

**1954-55**

October 1954 & February 1955:  
operations and took leave from Senate.

**1955-56**

W  
a



and Marine Corps  
12, 1944.\*

**1950-53**

Korean War.



John F. Kennedy and Jacqueline Bouvier on wedding day,  
September 12, 1953.\*<sup>5</sup>

**1946**

Elected to the House of Representatives.

**1952**

Defeated Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. for United States Senate.

19

\*John F. Kennedy Library, Library of Congress



# John F. Kennedy : The Time Line

**1957**

*Profiles in Courage* awarded the Pulitzer Prize.  
Daughter Caroline Bouvier Kennedy born November 27th.  
Served for the Senate committee on Foreign Relations.

**1960**

Won the Democratic nomination for President of the United States and picked Lyndon Johnson as his running mate.  
John Jr. is born November 25th. Elected President of the United States November 8.

**1963**

Assassinated by Lee Harvey Oswald, Friday, November 22nd.  
Lyndon B. Johnson becomes president.



Arrival of the President and First Lady at Dallas Love Field, November 22, 1963...day of assassination.<sup>46</sup>

**1958**

Won re-election to the Senate.

**1961**

Sworn in as the 35th President of the United States of America on January 20th.

**1956**

John F. Kennedy loses bid for Vice President to Tennessee Senator Estes Kefauver.  
*Profiles in Courage* published.

<sup>46</sup>Official Stoughton, White House/John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library, Boston