November 22, 2013 will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in Dallas, Texas—perhaps the most infamous single event of the twentieth century.

Dallas, November 1963 observes the anniversary by looking back on the world-altering assassination from the perspective of a young surgeon at Dallas’s Parkland Memorial Hospital who worked valiantly to save the president’s life. Dr. Kenneth Salyer, who has gone on to become an internationally renowned reconstructive plastic surgeon, recounts in riveting detail the events of that infamous day, the nature of the president’s injuries, and his startling medical insights into the reality of what occurred at Dallas’s Dealey Plaza when the president was shot.

For half a century, historians, journalists, forensic scientists, and amateur investigators have tried to determine conclusively whether assassin Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone or as part of a conspiracy. Numerous theories continue assert that there must have been a second gunman, yet if in fact there was one, his identity has to be considered perhaps the best-kept secret of all time.

One of the several surgeons who worked valiantly to keep the president alive, Dr. Salyer believes—and argues forcefully—that the very heavy leather back brace the president wore because of injuries he sustained in World War II (and which Dr. Salyer personally cut away) factored directly, even decisively, in the president’s death.

Dr. Salyer contends that the brace kept the president rigidly upright following the first, non-lethal bullet wound to his neck. That bullet struck Governor Connally after it excited the president’s body
and Connally slumped deeply in his seat milliseconds after he was hit. But despite the seriousness of the president’s neck wound, he continued to sit up very straight, giving Oswald a clear and continuing target.

Many people have argued over the years that the fact that Kennedy’s body remained upright is evidence that the first gunshot came from in front of the limousine in which he rode—a shot that must have been fired by a second gunman. Most forensic scientists now believe, however, that the first bullet did indeed pass from back to front through the president’s neck.

Dr. Salyer is convinced that, tragically, the brace cost President Kennedy his life by keeping his head high, allowing the second bullet to tear away much of the right side of his skull. The back brace and its rigidity, he believes, strongly support the theory that Oswald acted alone, a conclusion that has increasingly has become widely accepted by experts over the decades.

Dr. Salyer’s recollections of the emergency room chaos—where Jacqueline Kennedy stood alone in the corner while the surgeons worked tirelessly to revive her husband, still wearing her blood-stained pink suit and pill-box hat—are riveting. And following the official declaration that the president was dead, Dr. Salyer was the sole witness to the brief but very moving way in which Mrs. Kennedy spent a few final moments with her husband and bade him goodbye.

As the focal interview subject of *Dallas, November 1963*, Dr. Salyer, who has lived in Dallas for more than half a century, also speaks eloquently about how reactionary and truly dangerous the city was early in the 1960s, and how advisers had strongly urged the president to stay away from the “City of Hate,” as it was sometime called. And he recounts compellingly both the shame the assassination brought on the city that has remained his home, and the determination of people like him to give Dallas a new face in the following decades.

**Dr. Salyer is making himself available exclusively to the producers of *Dallas, November 1963*.**

The producers also plan to interview Dan Rather, who was chief of CBS’s Southwest bureau in Dallas in 1963, and whose stellar reporting during the days following the assassination led to his assignment
as the network’s White House correspondent in 1964. They also hope to interview CBS’s Bob Schieffer, who reported for the Fort Worth Star Telegram at the time, and who, quite improbably, drove Lee Harvey Oswald’s wife and mother to the Dallas police headquarters in the hours following Oswald’s arrest.

The producers have exclusive access to the Mazziotta Collection, an archive of thousands of black-and-white photographs of early 1960s Dallas, and hundreds of images from the day of Kennedy’s visit and the aftermath of his murder. John and Peggie Mazziotta were both national award-winning photographers working for the Dallas Times Herald in the 1960s. Their collective work endures as a chronicle of Dallas’s social and political highs and lows, from its oil-boom high life to the horrific events surrounding the assassination of the president.

Dallas-based independent film producer Maurice Holden holds interview footage he conducted with late Texas Governor John Connally, in which Connally reflects on the chaos of the shootings and being wounded himself, footage that has never been seen and that is available for Dallas, November 1963. Holden is very well connected politically and socially in the Dallas area—one of those people who knows everyone worth knowing and who can open doors to many people.

The producers plan to use excerpts of the brief footage shot by Abraham Zapruder that graphically records the moments during which the president and Governor Connally were shot, which is in the public domain. And they also plan to incorporate excerpts from a little-known nineteen-minute film called “The Last Two Days, November 1963: 21-22,” which was created soon after the assassination and is part of the White House Film collection. It offers a concise overview of the president’s Texas trip and the nightmare of the afternoon of November 22 in a narrative and visual style that are highly evocative of the era. The film is housed at the John F. Kennedy Library and is also in the public domain.

Actor Dennis Haysbert is formally attached as narrator and on-location host. His voice, his trusted persona, and the fact that he played the U.S. president in the series 24 make him ideal for the role, the producers believe.
Independent producer, cinematographer and editor **Tim Johnson**, based in Dallas, is poised to assume creative and/or producing roles that require being on the ground in Dallas.

Two-time Sundance Grand Jury Prize-winning cinematographer **Vasco Nunes** is attached as director of photography and is available to assume a producing role as well.

Academy Award-winning editor **Dan Swietlik**, who edited David Guggenheim’s *An Inconvenient Truth* and Michael Moore’s *Sicko*, will edit *Dallas, November 1963*.

And director **Russell Martin**, an internationally renowned author and documentarian, whose films include *Two Spirits*, winner of the Audience Award for the 2010-2011 season of the PBS series “Independent Lens,” leads the project.

The producers currently plan to produce a 75-minute film, edited for commercial breaks, and they will consider cutting a 52-minute documentary as well.

If developmental funding secured is early this spring, they can deliver a rough cut by September 1 and a fully scored and completed film by November 1, making broadcast of the film possible at any time during the anniversary month the acquiring network desires.

Russell Martin is the principal of Say Yes Quickly Productions®, based in Ojai, California. He and his colleagues bring many years of experience to their work in print, television, and film. They have recently completed *Beautiful Faces*, a documentary set in an extraordinary Mexico City hospital that is receiving wide acclaim and which will be broadcast around the world. Their award-winning documentary film *Two Spirits* was broadcast during the 2010-2011 season of the PBS series "Independent Lens," and won the season's Audience Award. Russell's bestselling book projects—including *Beethoven's Hair*, *Picasso's War*, and *Out of Silence*—have won numerous awards and have been translated into many languages.

Russell and his colleagues are known for dynamically synthesizing the historic and contemporary elements of filmed and written stories, grounding narrative in careful research, and making complex ideas readily comprehensible and deeply humane.
KENNETH E. SALYER, M.D. is internationally recognized as a pioneer and leader in craniofacial surgery. He is the founder of the International Craniofacial Institute and the Cleft Lip and Palate Treatment Center at Medical City Dallas Hospital and founder and chairman of the World Craniofacial Foundation.

As a general surgery resident at Dallas’s Parkland Hospital in November 1963, he was one of three surgeons who attempted to save the life of President John F. Kennedy, and is the only physician who attended to the president who remains alive.

In 1969, Dr. Salyer became the first Chairman of the Division of Plastic Surgery at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School in Dallas. He entered private practice in 1979 and has continued to maintain his commitment to teaching and research into the treatment of cleft lip and palate, bone replacement and regeneration, as well as craniofacial anomalies, and has made an active contribution to academic and research activities in the field. Dr. Salyer established the International Craniofacial Institute in Dallas in 1986, serving to date more than 13,000 patients from every state in the United States and more than seventy-five countries around the world.

What follows is excerpted from A Life That Matters: Transforming Faces, Renewing Lives, Dr. Kenneth E. Salyer, to be published on June 11, 2013 by Center Street, The Hachette Group
I’VE ALWAYS BEEN motivated by colleagues who strive for excellence and who bring a kind passion to their work and their mentoring. Those were the kinds of surgeons under whom I trained in Dallas and, with each surgery rotation, I became ever-more convinced that I had the aptitude, hand-eye coordination, and temperament that could help me become a good surgeon. And, like my mentors, I had the kind of burning desire to succeed that is almost impossible to teach.

By the fall of 1963, I had completed rotations in general surgery and vascular surgery, and was rotating in neurosurgery—something I was enjoying very much—when it was announced locally that President John F. Kennedy would visit Dallas and Fort Worth in a few weeks. I wasn’t particularly political, but something about the new president’s idealism and call to service to all Americans had moved me powerfully at his inauguration. His election seemed to signal a bright new era in the United States, one filled with hope and possibility, and, like many people in their twenties, for me the president was a heroic figure—larger than life, certainly, yet also someone you could emulate and look to for example and inspiration. The president had called on each of us to make a difference in our country and the world, and as a young surgeon in training I felt I was doing my part to answer his call.

I remember that despite the president’s limited popularity in Texas, almost all of us at Parkland had been exhilarated by the prospect of his visit, and in the cafeteria following early rounds on Thursday, November 22, several of us spoke about how
much we wished our schedules and responsibilities would have allowed us to see the
president in person during his short visit. Plans had called for him to travel in a
motorcade through downtown, not far from Parkland, and we might have caught a
glimpse of him, at least, but the demands of our rotations kept us away.

It was early afternoon, and I was on an upstairs ward of the hospital when the
shocking news began to spread that the president had been shot and had suffered at
least one serious wound to the head. One of my neurosurgery rotation duties was to
report to the emergency room to assist in head-trauma cases and, without waiting to
be called, I raced downstairs.

The president was already in the ER when I arrived and the room was filling
quickly with hospital personnel, secret service officers and police, and even reporters.
As I made my way to the gurney on which President Kennedy lay, I saw his wife
Jacqueline—wearing the blood-spattered pink suit that would become so emblematic
of that day—standing in a corner of the room, looking stunned, ashen, and very much
alone.

Already attending to the president was Jim Carrico, a fellow resident who had
been tending to John Connelly in the emergency room when Kennedy was wheeled
in, and Dr. Malcolm Perry, a vascular surgeon and professor who had become a friend
and mentor, soon joined us as well. We first focused our attention on getting the
president intubated in order to get air into his lungs. Dr. Carrico wasn’t having any
success getting a tube down through the president’s nose, so we focused instead on a
small bullet wound in the president’s neck through which he was sucking air. By
enlarging the size of the wound, we ultimately were able to insert a breathing tube into
the president’s lung. Although none of us spoke about it, it was already certain to each
of us that anything more we might do to assist the president would be in vain.

The whole right side of Kennedy’s cranium had been blown away by a gunshot
blast. Much of the right side of his brain had been destroyed as well, and the
remainder of it was exposed in a gaping hole in his skull. The injury was absolutely a
fatal one, yet although his brain had been devastated, his heart still beat, and his body
continued to reflexively gasp for breath. Our patient was fatally wounded, but he was
also the president of the United States, and we were obligated to try every heroic
procedure imaginable to save him.

We began to cut away the president’s clothes, and I remember my surprise at
the size and thickness of the massive brace he wore around his chest and abdomen. I
knew the president had suffered a back injury during his service in World War II, but
the brace was far more restrictive than anything I might have envisioned he would
wear. As I cut the brace, tightly laced like a corset, away with heavy shears, it was hard
to imagine he could move while wearing it, and it seemed certain that the war injury
was far more serious—and painful—than the public knew.

Next, we started an IV line in a vein in his right arm, gave him massive
amounts of blood, and continued the oxygen line. Jim Carrico began to vigorously
administer external cardiac massage and, when he tired after a long time, I continued
it. Aware that the president suffered with Addison’s disease—a disorder in which the adrenal glands do not produce sufficient glucocorticoids—we injected the president with steroids, then finally inserted chest tubes, but nothing we did improved his condition in any way. We worked intensely, suggesting to each other anything we might still try, but each of us knew, of course, that all hope was lost.

It was impossible to know in the horror of the moment how much time had passed. But after perhaps an hour there was little more we could attempt. Other people in the room sensed the inevitable outcome and surely the First Lady did as well. I glanced at her in the corner and saw someone standing beside her now, but she continued to stand erect and without assistance, her face expressing both her shock and her profound sorrow.

We had been joined in the ER by Dr. Kemp Clark, the hospital’s chief of neurosurgery, and by other senior surgeons and physicians, yet the scene was one of complete helplessness despite the decades of collective experience we brought to our effort. Finally, it was Dr. Clark who reminded us that in addition to attempting to keep the president alive, we shared an obligation to be truthful about his condition. Every monitor attached to his body had flat-lined, and Dr. Clark quietly conferred with each of us, then pronounced in a calm but shaken voice, “Gentlemen, President Kennedy has died.”

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I remember a mass exodus from the room in the moments after the announcement was made. Reporters rushed for telephones, and others simply wandered away in disbelief. But somehow, I couldn’t do anything. I had worked with utter focus and without distraction until the pronouncement, but as I heard the words that confirmed the president’s death, I simply could do no more.

As I stood at the table, Mrs. Kennedy approached it, and I remember her looking at me as if to ask if that were okay. I nodded, of course, and I watched as she moved close to the president’s body. She leaned across him to reach his left hand, removed his wedding ring and placed it on one of her fingers, and then she simply held her husband’s hand in a final goodbye. A priest joined her after a time, gave the president the last rites, and then escorted the First Lady out of the room.

I was still standing beside the table, numb and disbelieving, when a few men entered the room with a wooden casket, placed the president’s body inside it, then carried him away. I was vividly aware of everything that was going on around me, yet it was as if I were somehow watching from some distance. But it wasn’t long before my numbness was replaced by terrible sadness, by a kind of grief I’d never experienced before. My hero, my champion, a man I had admired and believed in and been hugely inspired by had died in the hands of my colleagues and me. It was impossible, yet it had happened.

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Nearly fifty years later, November 22, 1963, remains a pivotal and powerfully important day in my life, and not simply because fate had involved me in one of the most notorious events of the twentieth century. Instead, the president’s shooting and my small role in trying to keep him alive offered lessons that were both immediate and have proven to be lifelong.

I was just twenty-seven years old when the president was assassinated and my career in medicine was still in its infancy. I didn’t yet know—really powerfully understand—how fragile the human body is in addition to also being remarkably resilient. Yet that day, and in the most dramatic way imaginable, I was offered proof that despite medicine’s advances and its occasional miracles, death is always only tenuously at bay—for each of us. Like all animals, we live each day of our lives on the precipice of death, whether we’re conscious of that reality or not. Yet it’s the certainty that death awaits us that gives life its meaning.

And for the first time that day, I realized that while we are well-served to keep the certainty of death somewhere in our consciousness, the fear of dying—a fear I continued to carry with me as a constant burden—serves only to limit what we can accomplish while we live. President Kennedy certainly could not have achieved what he did in his forty-six years had his first concern simply been his survival. His military heroism, his work as a public servant, his inspiration to Americans and people around the world to achieve greatness would have been impossible had he been consumed by the question of when his own death would come. And I realized that if I were to
achieve what I hoped to, I’d have to channel the fears that were born in my childhood sickbed into a steely kind of determination to accomplish as much as I could no matter how much time was allowed me.

From that terrible day forward, I realized that John F. Kennedy had led an extraordinary life not because his life was long but because of who he had been and what he had accomplished during the time he lived. If I were to have an impact on the world, if my life were to matter in the end, I would have to accept that each succeeding day was all the certainty I’d ever have, and that my job was to make the most of each day, regardless of how many there would be.

I couldn’t be certain why, but my long years of fear and illness and uncertainty about my future had long ago kindled in me a desire for my life to have some substance. And then suddenly—and profoundly unexpectedly—the death of my hero before my eyes flamed that quiet desire into a passion. I wanted to live a life of consequence, I somehow had to, I now knew. I had to help improve the lives of others, much like he had done, yet in ways that suited my own skills and talents and experience. I didn’t yet know the precise path I would take, but I knew it would become my life’s mission. I would forge myself into a kind of surgeon who truly made a difference in his patients’ lives and perhaps even in the lives of people I’d never meet. My work would matter, I vowed. And so would my life, a life I was eager to live.
THE MAZZIOTTA COLLECTION

John and Peggie Mazziotta met and married while staff photographers at the Fort Worth Star Telegram in the hopeful years following the end of World War II. They moved to Dallas in 1952 and remained there throughout their careers, producing dozens of national award-winning images as they covered politics, the arts, and culture throughout north Texas.

They shared an artistic eye, a strong work ethic, and a passion for the adrenaline rush of capturing fleeting moments, characteristics that made their work regular front-page material for the Dallas Morning News in the fifties and the Dallas Times Herald in the sixties. Between them, they photographed hundreds of memorable faces and the look and “feel” of the region and the era. The Mazziottas’ collective work endures as a chronicle of Dallas’s social and political highs and lows, from oil-boom high life to the horrific events surrounding the assassination of President John F Kennedy.

John and Peggie are now deceased and the Mazziotta Collection, comprised of more than 12,000 professional and personal images, is managed and curated by their daughter Jan Mazziotta Howes. She is making the images in the collection that are related to the Kennedy assassination available exclusively to this project.
DENNIS HAYBERT is a film and television actor best known for portraying U.S. President David Palmer on the television series 24, for which he received a Golden Globe nomination, Sergeant Major Jonas Blane on the drama series The Unit, and baseball player Pedro Cerrano in the Major League film trilogy.

He appeared as Nelson Mandela in the film Goodbye Bufana, and his work has been heralded in films such as Jarhead, Far From Heaven, and Love Field.

He performed on Broadway in David Mamet’s Race.

Dennis has narrated numerous film and television documentaries, including Secrets of Pearl Harbor for the Discovery Channel and The World According To Dick Cheney, which will air on Showtime in March 2013.

He has been the commercial spokesperson for Allstate Insurance for many years and is one of the most trusted and admired celebrities in America.
Vasco Lucas Nunes, AIP, is a Portuguese cinematographer based in Los Angeles whose films such as Dig!, Planet B-Boy, We Live In Public, Blood For Water, and Anvil: The Story of Anvil have become part of the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, earned two Grand Jury Prizes at the Sundance Film Festival, a Peabody Award, an IDFA Special Jury Prize, and selections at major film festivals around the world.

In 2012, he was director of photography for Russell Martin’s highly acclaimed documentary film Beautiful Faces, and has was recently the cinematographer for OWN’s Oprah Builds A Network.
DAN SWIETLIK edited *An Inconvenient Truth*, directed by Davis Guggenheim, which won the Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature in 2007, and an Eddie Award as Best Edited Documentary Feature Film from the American Cinema Editors, USA, as well as the Humanitas Prize.

He edited Michael Moore’s *Sicko*, which was nominated for a 2008 Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature and won that year’s Eddie Award for Best Edited Documentary Feature Film from the American Cinema Editors, USA.

Both films are among the top twenty-five highest grossing documentaries of all time.

A veteran commercial and television editor, his additional documentary features include *Re:Generation, The Gift, Holy Wars*, and *The People Speak*. 

His nonfiction book Beethoven's Hair, a United States bestseller and a Washington Post Book of the Year, has been published in twenty-one translated editions and is the subject of a Gemini-award-winning film of the same name. His books have been optioned by Robert Redford’s Wildwood Enterprises, the Denver Center Theatre Company, and New World Television. He is, says Kirkus Reviews, “first and foremost a masterful storyteller.”

Russell’s highly acclaimed book Picasso's War has been published in seven international editions; Out of Silence was named by the Bloomsbury Review as one of fifteen best books of its first fifteen years of publication, and A Story That Stands Like A Dam: Glen Canyon and the Struggle for the Soul of the West, won the Caroline Bancroft History Prize.

When he was awarded an honorary doctorate by Colorado College in 1995, the citation read, in part, “Mr. Martin offers to general audiences precise and accurate, but highly readable, studies of extraordinarily complex issues. He does more: he sees beyond what is already known; he moves beyond synthesis to new insights. His work is disciplined, analytical, and creative. It is also profoundly humane.”

He is based in Ojai, California.