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00:00:00,550 --> 00:00:19,690

fifty years ago President John Kennedy\h
survived an assassination attempt on the\h\h

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00:00:19,690 --> 00:00:26,860

streets of Dallas Texas I'm Peter DuBose and\h
this is Roundtable on the CB 2 radio network

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00:00:32,040 --> 00:00:39,570

we now know that powerful forces were unleashed\h
by that near-miss on November 22nd 1963 they put\h\h

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00:00:39,570 --> 00:00:46,110

the kennedy administration into turmoil and of\h
course led to a constitutional crisis here today\h\h

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00:00:46,110 --> 00:00:51,960

to talk about those long ago events is our weekly\h
round table panel first there's Cynthia Freeman\h\h

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00:00:51,960 --> 00:00:57,450

White House correspondent for the CB 2 Network\h
- Cynthia's right we have presidential historian\h\h

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00:00:57,450 --> 00:01:04,140

and Kennedy biographer Brian hitch finally\h
there's Jonathan Berkowitz the son of the late\h\h

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00:01:04,140 --> 00:01:11,310

investigative journalist Stephen Berkowitz Brian\h
let's start with you five decades later how should\h\h

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00:01:11,310 --> 00:01:15,930

we be looking at the Kennedy presidency Peter\h
I think we have to at least start with what the\h\h

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00:01:15,930 --> 00:01:21,990

Kennedy presidency accomplished it did keep us\h
alive during a very tense time during the Cold\h\h

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00:01:21,990 --> 00:01:28,980
War it did introduce the topic of civil rights to
the nation in a profound way and eventually it did

12
00:01:28,980 --> 00:01:33,660
step back from a deeper involvement in Vietnam
so there were a lot of things that the Kennedy

13
00:01:33,660 --> 00:01:38,820
administration should get some credit for but as
your introduction makes very clear things changed

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00:01:38,820 --> 00:01:44,640
that day in Dallas when President Kennedy was shot
at but did not die if he died that day he might

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00:01:44,640 --> 00:01:50,010
have become a martyr in our country but that's
not what happened instead by surviving he became

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00:01:50,010 --> 00:01:56,580
a mere mortal and he went back to a Washington DC
that was on fire with these events and he ended up

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00:01:56,580 --> 00:02:02,220
having to fight for his presidency in a way that
no president has ever had to fight for quite in

18
00:02:02,220 --> 00:02:08,280
the same way before or since and as a consequence
of that I think our nation was changed I know the

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00:02:08,280 --> 00:02:14,070
Kennedy administration was certainly changed
and we should probably look back on it for the

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00:02:14,070 --> 00:02:19,170
reality of the situation which is we remember
it not so much anymore for what it did but for

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00:02:19,170 --> 00:02:24,690

how it ended what about that Cynthia Freeman does the unraveling of the Kennedy administration have

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00:02:24,690 --> 00:02:29,610

any relevance in today's White House oh it most certainly does I think the whole relationship

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00:02:29,610 --> 00:02:35,610

between the press corps and the office of the presidency has fundamentally changed forever to

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00:02:35,610 --> 00:02:41,910

a more serious one a more accountable one let me paint you a word picture for a moment the

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00:02:41,910 --> 00:02:48,190

White House pool an area of recreation too much recreation as it came out in these details is

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00:02:48,190 --> 00:02:55,180

now the press corps it is the the office where we have our our briefings and the presidents

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00:02:55,180 --> 00:03:01,630

are held accountable and in their second terms especially accountable as a result of everything

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00:03:01,630 --> 00:03:08,200

that happened with JFK let's bring in Jonathan Berkowitz now your father co-wrote the 1965 story

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00:03:08,200 --> 00:03:14,020

about John Kennedy's secret life what memories do you have of that story and of course the aftermath

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00:03:14,020 --> 00:03:19,510

well of course I was just a kid at that time we had my mom and I had recently moved there to

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00:03:19,510 --> 00:03:26,740

Washington to be with my dad and you know we were
very excited for him because he was covering the

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00:03:26,740 --> 00:03:32,380

president and it was a great story for him and
then this scandal happened and all of a sudden

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00:03:32,380 --> 00:03:39,010

everything kind of turned upside down I didn't
really have a you know a great understanding of

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00:03:39,010 --> 00:03:45,100

what was going on but I knew there was a lot of
pressure and stress and and my father actually

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00:03:45,100 --> 00:03:52,990

took me aside and told me that some kids might
say some nasty things at school actually that

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00:03:52,990 --> 00:03:58,810

didn't happen I don't think any of the kids were
really aware of what was going on or that I was

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00:03:58,810 --> 00:04:05,560

any part of it because I really wasn't but we
had to be on our toes about it and you know as

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00:04:05,560 --> 00:04:11,560

I got older I look back on it and you know people
have mixed feelings about my father's work during

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00:04:11,560 --> 00:04:17,770

that time but I'm very proud of what he did I
think it was a story that had to be told and he

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00:04:17,770 --> 00:04:24,250

did it with integrity and in great journalistic
skill Brian hitch set the table for us here now

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00:04:24,250 --> 00:04:30,100

aside from surviving the shooting in Dallas what
was the most dramatic moment in what remained of

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00:04:30,100 --> 00:04:35,560

the Kennedy presidency Peter there were so many
dramatic moments was truly an unprecedented time

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00:04:35,560 --> 00:04:40,540

and it almost depends on who you talk to a lot
of historians do tend to focus on what happened

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00:04:40,540 --> 00:04:45,280

with those audio tapes as you recall those were
the tapes that were made in the Oval Office by

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00:04:45,280 --> 00:04:50,860

President Kennedy and his advisors often including
Attorney General Robert Kennedy and so when those

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00:04:50,860 --> 00:04:57,460

tapes were destroyed and prevented from being
entered into evidence by legitimate congressional

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00:04:57,460 --> 00:05:02,980

authority that was a big scandal in a big dramatic
moment and when Dave powers came forward and

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00:05:02,980 --> 00:05:08,530

admitted that he had destroyed them and he was
a presidential aide that was was heavy drama and

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00:05:08,530 --> 00:05:14,740

a lot of other people focus also on the firing of
J Edgar Hoover Hoover and Kennedy never got along

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00:05:14,740 --> 00:05:21,430

but Hoover always had those files on the President
and that was what he used to basically cause

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00:05:21,430 --> 00:05:26,200
the Kennedys to do things the way he wanted them
done but it's at a certain point the relationship

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00:05:26,200 --> 00:05:31,240
was broken and Hoover was literally fired by the
president in the Oval Office which had to be very

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00:05:31,240 --> 00:05:37,090
dramatic and of course because of that firing
Hoover went on and made sure that the Kennedy

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00:05:37,090 --> 00:05:42,070
file was leaked which ultimately led to the
unraveling of the Kennedy administration in the

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00:05:42,070 --> 00:05:47,380
second term so those really are high points for
a lot of people but I have one of my own that

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00:05:47,380 --> 00:05:53,500
think is the one that strikes me most because it's
so very personal imagine the night of November

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00:05:53,500 --> 00:05:59,710
22nd John Kennedy has been fired upon in broad
daylight on a public street in Dallas in front

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00:05:59,710 --> 00:06:06,190
of a crowd and he has survived thanks to the brave
efforts of Secret Service agent Clint Hill when he

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00:06:06,190 --> 00:06:11,710
returns to the White House that night he is still
wearing the same suit the same blood-soaked suit

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00:06:11,710 --> 00:06:16,960
with the blood of Clint Hill on him and he doesn't
even change clothes he goes into the Oval Office

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00:06:16,960 --> 00:06:23,080
where his brother is waiting to meet him and the
two begin to discuss who might have been behind

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00:06:23,080 --> 00:06:28,780
the Dallas shooting and the Attorney General of
the United States sprawls on a notepad we can't

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00:06:28,780 --> 00:06:34,330
talk here and the president and the Attorney
General excused themselves from the Oval Office

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00:06:34,330 --> 00:06:39,400
and go to a more secure place where they would
not be recorded and you have to ask yourself in

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00:06:39,400 --> 00:06:44,020
terms of drama what was it that the President
of the United States and the Attorney General

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00:06:44,020 --> 00:06:49,150
of the United States had to talk about that
was so secret that it couldn't be talked about

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00:06:49,150 --> 00:06:55,000
in the Oval Office of the United States and the
answer to that question of course is what changed

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00:06:55,000 --> 00:07:00,820
history and ended a presidency Jonathan what
about you what were your recollections of the

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00:07:00,820 --> 00:07:07,000
most dramatic moments in the Kennedy presidency
well for my family it was it was clearly when

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00:07:07,000 --> 00:07:14,880
this investigation was about to come out my father
was working extremely hard at that time and under

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00:07:14,880 --> 00:07:20,910
a lot of pressure and the magazine wasn't even
sure that they wanted to publish the work that

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00:07:20,910 --> 00:07:27,240
my father did with his partner Frank Altman
and you know they had to go through lawyers

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00:07:27,240 --> 00:07:33,570
and make a final decision and before they did
they wanted to get the Kennedy administration

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00:07:33,570 --> 00:07:40,710
on record because the the president and no one
in his administration really had commented very

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00:07:40,710 --> 00:07:49,740
substantively on my father's findings so they took
the unusual step unprecedented really of inviting

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00:07:49,740 --> 00:07:57,360
them to the magazine office to review the story
right there in the office before it was published

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00:07:57,360 --> 00:08:04,170
and they and and the president didn't come but
Robert Kennedy came with a team of his advisers

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00:08:04,170 --> 00:08:12,330
and they gave them an office in the in the you
know on the floor there and not in the newsroom

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00:08:12,330 --> 00:08:17,010
but in an office there a private office where they
were able to close the curtains and keep everybody

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00:08:17,010 --> 00:08:22,320
from looking inside and my father was in there
trying to get some clue of what was happening

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00:08:22,320 --> 00:08:31,830

and when when the doors opened and Robert Kennedy\h
came out he gave my father a look that my father\h\h

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00:08:31,830 --> 00:08:39,870

described as chilling him to his bones and he knew\h
from that point on that everything was going to be\h\h

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00:08:39,870 --> 00:08:45,210

different for him as a reporter in Washington the\h
Cynthia your thoughts your most dramatic moments\h\h

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00:08:45,210 --> 00:08:50,490

in the Kennedy presidency well Peter I want to\h
put the spotlight here on Jacqueline Kennedy\h\h

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00:08:50,490 --> 00:08:59,670

in her role here we had a peel of it first lady\h
betrayed so there was a top story scandal breaking\h\h

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00:08:59,670 --> 00:09:04,890

two days later there's a news conference how\h
is Jacqueline Kennedy the lover of the Arts the\h\h

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00:09:04,890 --> 00:09:11,670

fashion trendsetter going to handle this how is\h
she going to divorce her husband this is something\h\h

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00:09:11,670 --> 00:09:17,220

everybody wanted to know how is someone with such\h
an elegance gonna handle some very dirty business\h\h

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00:09:17,220 --> 00:09:24,060

and what she did became a role model for future\h
political wives because she held her head she\h\h

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00:09:24,060 --> 00:09:32,640

stood by her man and largely ignored the betrayal\h
and went on with her life she did not divorce JFK\h\h

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00:09:32,640 --> 00:09:39,120
and later we found out that basically she had
cut a deal Joe Kennedy had reached out to Ethel

92
00:09:39,120 --> 00:09:45,420
and said we will set up trust funds for your two
children but they will only stay active if you do

93
00:09:45,420 --> 00:09:51,480
not divorce my son and she respected that she
was a wonderful mother and the rest is history

94
00:10:09,940 --> 00:10:16,210
I want to thank our guests today Cynthia
Freeman Jonathan Berkowitz and Brian Hitch

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00:10:16,210 --> 00:10:22,540
and a reminder the cb2 TV network will air a
two-hour documentary special on the events of

96
00:10:22,540 --> 00:10:28,270
Dallas Texas and the subsequent constitutional
crisis on Friday November 22nd at 8 p.m.