

## Reconsidering JFK – A Wondrium Course

by Rev. Joe Dirt - Monday, January 30, 2023

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If you are of my generation or older you remember the day President John F. Kennedy was shot, 22 November 1963. I was in 6<sup>th</sup> grade at an elementary school in Toms River, New Jersey. It was the first time in my educational career that I had had a male teacher. He was a very tall, skinny man who I remember mainly because he was male and his reaction to the Kennedy news. When they announced over the loudspeaker that the President had been assassinated, this man cried. However, when I raised my hand after the announcement to ask a question he waved me off. Both things made a deep impression on me. Using the hindsight of 58 years, I hope he was simply too choked up to talk.

As I remember it, Kennedy was popular and his wife, Jacqueline even more so. I do remember my father had a comedy album – yeah that was a thing – poking fun of Kennedy and the White House. After the assassination my father never played the album again. It stopped being funny, and would have been disrespectful.

Kennedy was nothing if not complex. Can you imagine what the press would do with his open womanizing in this day and age? Then put the Bay of Pigs against the Cuban Missile Crisis. He totally blew it in the first instance, and may have prevented a large scale war in the second. Put his vision for putting a man on the moon against his Cold War warrior attitude that led to our involvement in Vietnam. He was a new style politician who understood and used the power of the new medium of television. With Kennedy it seemed that for every yin there was yang... and not always in a positive sense.

I bring all this up as I recently watched a [Wondrium](#) course, [Reconsidering JFK](#) that I highly recommend to anyone that has any interest in American history. It was taught by [Michael Shelden, PhD](#), an absolutely amazing historian, IMHO, and a wonderful presenter in the Wondrium format. I have watched every course he has on this platform, first discovering his biography on [George Orwell](#) that was based on his book that is an authorized biography of this influential author. His George Orwell biography was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. It must have been tough competition that year if he did not win. I will list all his other courses on Wondrium at the end of this article.

One very interesting topic that Professor Shelden touched on was Lyndon B. Johnson. LBJ was not happy being Vice President, especially so after wielding all the power he had as Senate Majority Leader. I strongly came away with the impression that Shelden was not a fan of LBJ on several fronts. One thing that I did not know before was the reason Kennedy was in Texas. It was due to some of the shenanigans of LBJ that were threatening the lost of Texas for Kennedy in the upcoming presidential election. Of

course, LBJ is another “complex” American president. I have often wondered about the psychology of many of the folks that have sought after so much power. To me, it often seems less than healthy.

Today the memory of Kennedy seems to be in two dueling camps. In one he is the stuff of mythology and legend. In the other he is a deeply flawed individual who made far too many mistakes and accomplished little. One thing that I had forgotten was that it was Jackie, his wife, who pushed the Camelot analogy. She worked hard most of her life to protect his legacy. As in most of these things, the truth, in all likelihood, lies somewhere in the middle. Professor Sheldon hopefully will shed a little light for you on this very interesting American president that was only in office a short time.

This course is available both on the Wondrium streaming platform or you can buy the DVD at [The Great Courses, Reconsidering JFK](#).

It is well worth your time and money.

Other courses on Wondrium by Michael Sheldon, PhD

[How Winston Churchill Changed the World](#)

[George Orwell: A Sage for All Seasons](#)

[England, the 1960s, and the Triumph of the Beatles](#)

And so it goes.

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