

# NOVEMBER 22, 1963: DALLAS, MOAB and a 'CHEYENNE AUTUMN' Jim Stiles

*"People will remember today as a day to date things in their lives from, in the same way they did with President Roosevelt. They say, where were you when President Roosevelt died.... they will say the same thing about where were you when you first heard the word of President Kennedy's assassination."*

--Harry Reasoner, CBS News  
5:42 p.m., November 22, 1963

*"There is implicit in all human tragedy a waste, a pointlessness. Tragedy unobserved is even more pointless. But tragedy unremembered surely must rank with profound sin."*

--Saul Pett, 1964



In the early autumn of 1963, John Kennedy made a trip to Utah. Still shaken by the previous October's Cuban Missile Crisis, the President had something on his mind, and he wanted to tell the citizens of the most conservative state in the union what it was. Elected as a Cold War warrior, a president who "would pay any price, bear any burden" to fight Communist aggression around the world, Kennedy had traveled to the brink of global nuclear annihilation and now his world view had changed.

And so, on October 3, 1963, in the Mormon Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, the president laid out his vision of the future, which included cooperation, not confrontation with the Soviet Union. It was a risky proposal to make anywhere; in the Rocky Mountain West, it almost seemed suicidal. He talked about the Limited Test Ban Treaty with the Soviet Union, just ratified by the Senate:

"It took Brigham Young 108 days to go from Winter Quarters, Nebraska, to the valley of the Great Salt Lake. It takes 30 minutes for a missile to go from one continent to another...That is why the test ban treaty is important as a first step, perhaps to be disappointed, perhaps to find ourselves ultimately set back, but at least in 1963 the United States committed itself, to one chance to end the radiation and the possibilities of burning."

To his surprise, the audience erupted in cheers and applause. Even here in the heart of the conservative Rocky Mountain West, Americans were weary and scared of the Cold War and the constant threat of world annihilation. Always the politician, Kennedy considered the enthusiastic response and wondered if his chances of electoral success in the western states had not improved. Clearly, he would be back in 1964.



**He stared at the unprotected platform where he would deliver his pre-breakfast address. "If anyone wants to get you, they can always do it."**

Six weeks later and a thousand miles away, a gray drizzle fell on the crowd of five thousand Kennedy supporters who had gathered in the parking lot across from the Ft. Worth Hotel Texas. The president of the United States was expected to address the group in a few minutes, and the man they awaited gazed down from the vantage point of his eighth floor suite.

John Kennedy was joined by two of his closest aides -- Ken O'Donnell and Larry O'Brien. O'Donnell, leafing through Friday morning's Dallas News, had fallen upon an ugly black-bordered full page advertisement. Its sardonic heading read -- "Welcome Mr. Kennedy to Dallas" and it was paid for by the local coordinator of the John Birch Society. The two men watched the President read each line and then saw him thrust the paper aside. Kennedy returned his gaze to the parking lot below and the milling crowd,

"You know," he said, "they talk about security, and protecting the President. But look at this." He stared at the unprotected platform where he would deliver his pre-breakfast address. "If anyone wants to get you, they can always do it."

In Moab, Utah the dawn of November 22nd broke sunny and bright; though the temperature had fallen to just below freezing during the night, the desert sun quickly removed the chill from the air and by noon the thermometer read in the 50s---typical fall shirtsleeve weather in the canyon country.

The town bustled with activity. Director John Ford and the cast and crew of his next movie, the Warner Brothers production of "Cheyenne Autumn" was in the Moab area for two weeks. The film starred Richard Widmark, Carroll Baker, Gilbert Roland, Dolores Del Rio and Ricardo Montalban and they were all here, along with a supporting cast and crew of about 350.



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It wasn't Director Ford's first trip to Moab and he indicated it wouldn't be the last. Not only was the scenery around Moab spectacular, Ford was grateful "to be able to escape such modern installations as telephone wires, traffic and airplanes...jet trails play havoc with western sky scenes in a movie."

Every motel and guest house in town was filled with cast and crew and locals watched in awe as the celebrities frequented Moab's eateries and night spots---Carroll Baker led a limbo line one night while Richard Widmark maintained the beat with a pair of chop sticks. But, as the Times-Independent reported, while "most all cafes are gathering spots for the stars, and although townspeople have enjoyed being present to see the famous stars, they have courteously respected their privacy."



Despite the movie crew, places to rent in Moab were still available. Holiday Haven advertised lots that week for \$30 a month, "all utilities furnished." And if you wanted to buy a home in Moab, a three-bedroom house in downtown Moab was listing for \$4,250.

On the morning of November 22nd, the film production was shooting at the movie-made Indian village near Tommy White's ranch (now Red Cliffs Lodge)




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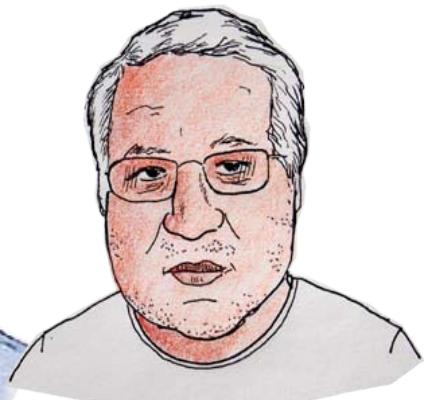
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