

LETTERS, VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Remembering the atmosphere of the world during the Kennedy era

To the Editor:

I was working at the Aircraft Credit Union on Colt street, almost directly across from our home and across from the famous jet engine manufacturer Pratt & Whitney. I just joined the Marine Reserves when the news came over the airways that President John F. Kennedy had been shot.

They sent us home from work almost immediately. I left for Paris Island in January, 1964. I remember marching by a gas station to get a haircut that March when we heard this unique music playing, guys with an English accent. It sounded weird at first, of course you could not talk to the guy next to you without getting the @%&* out of you to see if he knew who the group was. Crazy Milstead, my bunkmate from Alabama, was quietly and dangerously singing "Soldier Boy" by the Shirelles. He whispers "Naughton what and who is that?" Never dreaming that he/we would have a bigger question before graduating PI, "Like where and what in the hell is Vietnam?" I didn't know it was the Beatles that were just making their debut until

Wed when home on leave.

When we returned from leave we were marched into this bamboo village with pointed pungee stakes to which could potentially pierce the sole on your boot with urine etc.

I don't know about you, but it hit me later in life that the world changed on a dime when JFK was killed. Coincidentally, the innocent rock n' roll went from "Wake up, Little Susie" to "Strawberry Fields Forever" later "Purple Haze," etc. It never was the same again.

I tell my kids nothing stays the same, things always change. But change seemed to come at lightning speed back then. When I finally got to college in my early 20s - having done a stint as an electric power lineman for Helco - I noticed the long hair and striped slacks that flared out at bottom, the mustaches. I thought, "Why did I ever quit the best blue collar job in the US?" Getting ready to turn 60, I know now.

The reminder of JFK's assassination and all the above is my home. In 1984 business began to get good, so I went looking in our area of North Kingstown for land. There were

still several farms and estates going back to the revolution. An older couple, Sam and Laura Molony in their seventies no children owned over a 100 acres which they, unbeknown to me, decided to sell it all. I stumbled on a 2 3/4 acre lot looking down at a pond which at the time had Black Angus cattle grazing all over the place. I knocked on the door of their modest home (they sold the original brick Georgian Mansion earlier). So they now also looked down of the pond from the far end.

Believe or not, I bought the property on a hand shake. "Pay us whenever you can." It was such a deal I bought another smaller lot on a handshake, "pay whenever you can."

Our street in Rhode Island is

called Gosnold Road. I am often asked "where did that name come from?" I should tell you that Sam was a Navy lieutenant stationed at Quonset during World War II. I can't recall how he met Laura, but I believe it was somewhat arranged. Laura lived in Hyannisport, Mass. As a young girl, she babysat for many of the Kennedy babies. Her home was a Victorian across the way from the Kennedy Compound in Hyannisport, and her front porch faced the Cuttyhunk Islands founded in the 1500's by Bartholomew - congratulations, you guessed it - Gosnold. Less than a year after we move in, I noticed an unusual army of local police patrolling Fletcher Road, the main road out front. When I went to inves-

tigate I saw approx. 4 or 5 black SUVs with flashing lights coming up Fletcher and turning into the Molony's driveway. It was a bunch of the Kennedy clan coming to celebrate Laura's birthday.

Both Sam and Laura are now deceased, and except for the lack of cattle, and new houses like mine on large lots, it still feels pristine. When I rounded the turn into Gosnold this morning that street sign brought back memories - memories of the Molonys and the Kennedys. Today especially, Jack! That is my slight connection to the Kennedys.

Thank you very much!
Happy Turkey Day!

James P. "Jim" Naughton
North Kingstown,
Rhode Island