

1. We said deadly. That word was ill-advised. We will correct that. 2. John...er, Robert Francis Kennedy died this morning at 1:40 at Good Samaritan Hospital in Los Angeles. 3. Again, John Lennon is dead tonight of gunshot wounds at the age of 40. We now return to the Tonight Show. 4. I hope the astronauts... We have absolutely no sign at all of the shuttle itself. 5. I have him in the library shooting at students and...the lady in the library, I have on the phone. 6. You are looking at obviously a very disturbing live shot there. 7. What a week! Ed McMahon, Farrah Fawcett...

Seven American Deaths and Disasters

By Kenneth Goldsmith

Published by



To be released: **March 2013**

This PDF of **Seven American Deaths and Disasters**
is only a preview and an uncorrected proof.

Lifting images from mechanical files is strictly prohibited.

To see the complete version, please contact Nina Ventura,
Publicist: nina@powerHouseBooks.com

**SEVEN
AMERICAN
DEATHS
AND
DISASTERS**

KENNETH
GOLDSMITH

 **powerHouse Books**
BROOKLYN, NY

Seven American Deaths and Disasters

Text © 2013 Kenneth Goldsmith

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any manner in any media, or transmitted by any means whatsoever, electronic or mechanical (including photocopy, film or video recording, Internet posting, or any other information storage and retrieval system), without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Published in the United States by powerHouse Books,
a division of powerHouse Cultural Entertainment, Inc.

37 Main Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201-1021
Tel.: 212.604.9074 Fax: 212.366.5247
info@powerhousebooks.com
www.powerhousebooks.com

First edition, 2013

Library of Congress Control Number: 2012953462

ISBN: 978-1-57687-636-7

Book design by Krzysztof Poluchowicz

Printing in China by Shanghai Offset Printing Products Ltd.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

CONTENTS:

John F. Kennedy	9
Robert F. Kennedy	43
John Lennon	73
Space Shuttle Challenger	101
Columbine	121
World Trade Center	127
Michael Jackson	157
Afterword	169
Acknowledgments	176

Robert F. Kennedy

I.

My thanks to all of you and it's on to Chicago and let's win there.

We want Bobby! We want Bobby! We want Bobby! We want Bobby!

Senator. How are you going to counter Mr. Humphrey in his, uh, backgrounding you as far as the delegate votes go?

Senator Kennedy has been...Senator Kennedy has been shot! Is that possible? Is that possible? It could... Is it possible, ladies and gentlemen? It is possible he has... not only Senator Kennedy... Oh my God! Senator Kennedy has been shot. And another man, a Kennedy campaign manager. And possibly shot in the head. I am right here. Rafer Johnson has a hold of a man who apparently has fired the shot. He has fired the shot. He still has the gun. The gun is pointed at me right at this moment. I hope they can get the gun out of his hand. Be very careful. Get that gun! Get the gun! Get the gun! Stay away from the gun!

Get the gun!

Stay away from the gun! His hand is frozen. Get his

thumb! Get his thumb! Get his thumb! Take a hold of his thumb and break it if you have to! Get his thumb! Get away from the barrel! Get away from the barrel, man!

Watch it with the gun. Watch it with the gun!

Look out for the gun! Okay. Alright. That's it, Rafer!

Get it! Get the gun, Rafer!

Get the gun! Get the gun!

Okay now hold onto the guy!

Get the gun! Get the gun!

Hold on to him! Hold on to him! Ladies and gentlemen, they have the gun away from the man. They've got the gun. I can't see...I can't see the man. I can't see who it is. Senator Kennedy, right now, is on the ground. He has been shot. This is a...this is... What is he? Wait a minute. Hold him! Hold him! Hold him! We don't want another Oswald! Hold him Rafer, we don't want another Oswald! Hold him, Rafer! Keep people away from him! Keep people away from him! Alright ladies and gentlemen, this is...now... Make room! Make room! Make room! Make room! Make room! The senator is on the ground. He's bleeding profusely...from apparently... Clear back!... Apparently the senator has been shot from the, ah, in the... frontal area. We can't see exactly where the...where the senator has been shot, but... C'mon. Push back. C'mon. Grab a hold of me. Grab a hold of me and let's let's pull back. That's it. C'mon. Get a hold of my arms. Let's pull back. Let's pull back. Alright. The senator is now... The ambulance has been called and the ambulance is... Bring the ambulance in this entrance! And...this is a terrible thing. It's reminiscent of the Valley the other day when the senator was out there and somebody hit him in the head with rock and people couldn't believe it at that time, but it is a fact. Keep room! Ethel Kennedy is standing by. She is calm. She is raising her hand high to motion people

back. She's attempting to get calm. A woman...with a tremendous amount of presence. A tremendous amount of presence. It's impossible to believe. It's impossible to believe this. There's a...certain amount of fanaticism here now as this has occurred. No one... They're trying to run everybody back. Clear the area! Clear the area! Right at this moment...the senator apparently...we can't see if he is still conscious or not. Can you see if he is conscious?

What?

Can you see if he is conscious?

I don't know. He is half-conscious.

He is half-conscious. And ladies...we can't see, ladies and gentlemen. One of the men, a Kennedy, apparently a Kennedy supporter is going first... C'mon. Out! Out! Out! Is there some way to close these doors? Is there any doors here?

Get out! Get out!

Out through the...out through the exit. Let's go. Out we go.

Out.

Unbelievable situation. They're clearing the halls. One man has blood on himself. We're walking down the corridors here. Repetition in my speech. I have no alternative. The shock is so great. My mouth is dry. I can only say that here in the kitchen of the Ambassador Hotel, the back entrance, from the podium, in the press room, the senator walked out the back. I was directly behind him. You heard a balloon go off and a shot. You didn't really realize that the shot was a shot. And yet a scream went up. Two men were on the ground, both bleeding profusely. One of them was Senator Robert Kennedy. At this moment, we are stunned, we are shaking, as is everyone else in this kitchen corridor at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles. They're blocking

off the entrance now, supposedly to make room for the ambulance. That's all we can report at this moment. I do not know if the senator is dead or if he is alive. We do not know the name of the other gentleman concerned. This is Andrew West, Mutual News, Los Angeles.

II.

...about three hundred fifty. David Hayward with two hundred sixty and Walter Tucker with two hundred thirty-five. For the Republicans in the Seventeenth, Richard Howard has about three hundred votes. In the Twenty-second, uh, congressional district, James Corman, incumbent, is having no trouble at this point with his reelection bid in the primary in any event. He has about eighty-four percent of the vote. The leader for the Republicans is Joe Holt with about fifty-five percent of the vote. In the Twenty-ninth congressional district, in...

Jerry I'm sorry we're going to have to interrupt you. We have to go to Ray Williams right now to Kennedy headquarters in the Ambassador Hotel.

Right, Bob, and here we have a situation. Senator Robert Kennedy has been shot. The man is now calling for a doctor.

Is there a doctor in the house?

We don't know exactly who did the shooting or how it happened. The rumor we have is that, in the midst of some hysterical teenagers, a shot rang out. There was a noise. No one knew at the time whether it was a balloon or just what, but the senator has been shot. Exactly what his condition is, we don't really know. However, our producer has gone over to check and see if he can find out anything, but there is complete pandemonium here at the Embassy

Room at the Ambassador Hotel. Women are hysterical, they have been screaming.

The best thing that anyone can do here...

No one really knows who did it, whether they have apprehended the person who shot him or what.

...is to leave the room in an orderly way.

They're now asking for everyone to leave the room in an orderly fashion. Perhaps once they clear this room, then we can begin to probe into this drastic incident that is taking place here, find out exactly what it is.

We don't know what has happened.

Right now the gentlemen in charge of the Kennedy party are trying very hard to retain their composure, hoping that this will affect the crowd and help them to move out in an orderly fashion.

Would you please clear the room? Would you please clear the room in an orderly fashion?

Bob, it's unbelievable, what has happened here at the Embassy Room. We now have our producer coming this way with a youngster who evidently was very close to what was going on. We should be able to find something from him. Bring him over here.

Please leave the room.

What happened?

I saw this man go in the back. He started running back. And I saw and I heard he's been shot. That's all I heard.

What, uh, what man was it?

It was young...it was a young person. That's all I saw. Run back... I saw... I just saw somebody run back and then I heard somebody say he's been shot. And that's all I heard.

There were two people that ran back.

That's all. I saw this man run back there.

There has...has been a chase after that man?

John Lennon

I.

John Smith is on the line and I don't care what's on the line, Howard Cosell, you have got to say that we know in the booth.

Yes we have to say it. Remember this is just a football game no matter who wins or loses. An unspeakable tragedy confirmed to us by ABC News in New York City. John Lennon, outside of his apartment building on the West Side of New York City, the most famous perhaps of all of the Beatles, shot twice in the back, rushed to Roosevelt Hospital, dead on arrival. Hard to go back to the game after that newsflash. Frank Gifford?

Indeed it is.

...for scenes on December tenth, 1938, the first scenes from the film Gone With the Wind. The burning of Atlanta sequence lights the sky for miles...

We interrupt this program to bring you a special bulletin from NBC News. Former Beatle John Lennon is dead. Lennon died in a hospital shortly after being shot outside his New York apartment tonight. A suspect

is in custody but has not been identified. Again, John Lennon is dead tonight of gunshot wounds at the age of forty. We now return to The Tonight Show.

In the latest report that we've got from the Associated Press, a police spokesman says a suspect in the killing of Lennon is in custody but he would give no further details. The spokesman did say it was not a robbery and that Lennon was killed most likely by a deranged person. It's eleven fifteen right now and we're gonna be doing a full hour of the Beatles in lieu of Boston on Moon Rocks tonight.

It's eighteen minutes after eleven o'clock on this, a rather gloomy Monday now for, uh, I was going to say for fans of music, but certainly anyone. John Lennon, former Beatle, shot to death in New York City this evening. It happened outside his apartment building on the city's Upper West Side. Lennon, who just had his fortieth birthday in October, was rushed by police to Roosevelt Hospital and pronounced dead upon arrival. According to police, the shooting took place outside the Dakota, the century-old luxury apartment building where Lennon and wife Yoko Ono lived. Police have a suspect in custody. They describe him as a, quote, local screwball. And they say there doesn't seem to have been any motive for the shooting. It was just two months ago that John released his first single in more than five years, ironically titled Just Like Starting Over. John Lennon, dead tonight in New York at the age of forty.

...I would imagine Beatle fans, at this point, just fans of John Lennon who, for no other reason, are all shocked and just felt they wanted to come here and... and be close to him.

...every other song for the remainder of this hour will be, uh, a track of music by the Beatles, as we kind

of, uh, shall we say, think or exist in memorial for the death of John Lennon.

...his wife Yoko Ono was with him when he died. They do have a suspect in custody but the police have released no other details at this time. We will keep you posted on that situation of course.

John Lennon was shot tonight in New York and, uh, he is dead. And I think if you're looking for a radio station tonight that's not playing Beatles music, you will have a long hunt.

Stereo 101 doing a complete hour of Beatles songs, some written by Lennon some written by Lennon and McCartney, but John Lennon was a part of them all. It's eleven forty-nine right now and in case you haven't had your radio on, former Beatle John Lennon was shot and killed in front of his home on Manhattan's Upper West Side tonight. He was forty. Police said Lennon was shot three times about eleven o'clock tonight New York time and died in the emergency room at Roosevelt Hospital. His wife Yoko was with him when he died. A police spokesman says a suspect is in custody, but he had no other details available on the circumstances of the shooting. The spokesman did say that it was not a robbery and the person who shot Lennon was most likely deranged. A witness says a man in his mid-thirties with quote almost a smirk on his face gunned down the singer as Lennon, his wife, and several other people walked into the vestibule of the apartment building where the Lennons lived. The witness says the residents of the hotel told him the man had been in the vestibule for hours before the shooting. According to the witness, the man quote just walked out and shot Lennon. Lennon, who celebrated his fortieth birthday on October ninth, just released an album, Double

Fantasy, that he made with his wife in what was to be a comeback for the pair. Once again former Beatle John Lennon was shot and killed tonight at his Manhattan Upper West Side apartment. He was forty.

WWDC remembers a rock 'n' roll legend, John Lennon.

Standing in the dock at Southampton, tryin' to get to Holland or France.

...John Lennon was brought to the emergency room of the Roosevelt St. Luke's Hospital this evening shortly before eleven p.m. He was dead on arrival.

That is Stephan Lynn, a doctor at Roosevelt Hospital who just a little while ago confirmed that John Lennon has been shot and killed in New York City. Lennon and his wife Yoko Ono were on their way back from the Record Plant, a recording studio in New York City. Their limousine pulled up to their apartment building, the Dakota on New York's Upper West Side, and as they were walking into the Dakota, Lennon was shot apparently seven times in the chest. Lennon was shot reportedly by a white male who has been taken into custody. His identity has not been released but local police have described him as a local screwball and that's about all they've said so far. After Lennon was shot, he was taken by police car to Roosevelt Hospital in New York City. According to witnesses, there was blood all over the place but there was absolutely nothing that anybody could do. Lennon was pronounced dead on arrival at around eleven thirty p.m. Eastern Standard Time. With me is Source correspondent CD Jako, who has just come back from Roosevelt Hospital. CD, you had an opportunity to hear the doctors explain what happened. What did they say?

The doctor, Stephan Lynn, told us that there was

absolutely no chance for John Lennon. He said, in his medical opinion, that he was probably dead before he hit the ground. He had seven massive wounds in his chest at close range. The caliber of bullets he couldn't ascertain, but that the shots apparently ruptured most of the internal blood vessels and major organs. A policeman who was there, however, told me that Lennon was conscious after being shot. When he asked him—are you John Lennon?—Lennon replied, yes, before being put into the police car and rushed to Roosevelt Hospital. The doctor said he informed Yoko Ono, who was at the hospital at the time and that she, in his words, found the news very, very difficult to take. She has been rushed from Roosevelt Hospital, possibly back to the Dakota. He said it was massive chest wounds and that there was absolutely nothing anyone could do. We spoke to Jack Douglas, who was Lennon's producer on the new album *Double Fantasy*. He said that Lennon had been, as you said, at the Record Plant working on a new single and that that new single was to have been mastered by John Lennon tomorrow. Mr. Douglas obviously was completely distraught, as were most of the people there.

Thanks, CD. John Lennon, of course, was one of the architects of the Beatles, one of the most important rock 'n' roll bands in the history of rock 'n' roll—that probably goes without saying. Lennon had been in retirement for about the last six years, and in just the last few months, Lennon had gone back into the recording studio to record a new record with Yoko Ono called *Double Fantasy*. And again, John Lennon was shot dead tonight on his way inside his apartment in New York City.

We'll be doing a Devo/Hall and Oates concert

World Trade Center

I.

This just in. You are looking at obviously a very disturbing live shot there. That is the World Trade Center, and we have unconfirmed reports this morning that a plane has crashed into one of the towers of the World Trade Center.

We are right now just beginning to work on this story, obviously calling our sources and trying to figure out exactly what happened. But clearly, something relatively devastating happening this morning here on the south end of the island of Manhattan.

This is, once again, a picture of one of the towers of the World Trade Center.

And as we can see in these pictures, obviously something devastating that has happened. And again, there are unconfirmed reports that a plane has crashed into one of the towers there. We are efforting more information on the subject as it becomes available to you.

Right now we've got Sean Murtagh—he is our

producer—on the telephone. Sean, what can you tell us what about you know?

This is Sean Murtagh. I just was standing on the vice president of the vice president of finance.

Sean, we're on the air right now. What can you tell us about the situation?

Hello?

Yes, Sean, you are on the air right now. Go ahead. What can you tell us?

I just witnessed a plane that appeared to be cruising at slightly lower than normal altitude over New York City, and it appears to have crashed into—I don't know which tower it is—but it hit directly in the middle of one of the World Trade Center towers.

Sean, what kind of plane was it? Was it a small plane, a jet?

It was a jet. It looked like a two-engine jet, maybe a 737.

You are talking about a large passenger commercial jet.

A large passenger commercial jet.

Where were you when you saw this?

I am on the twenty-first floor of five Penn Plaza.

Did it appear that the plane was having any difficulty flying?

Yes, it did. It was teetering back and forth, wingtip to wingtip, and it looks like it crashed into, probably, twenty stories from the top of the World Trade Center, maybe the eightieth to eighty-fifth floor. There is smoke billowing out of the World Trade Center.

Sean, what happened next? Does it appear to you that the plane is still inside the World Trade Center?

From my angle—I'm viewing south towards the Statue of Liberty and the World Trade Center—it looks

like it has been embedded in the building. I can't see, from my vantage point, whether it has come out the other side.

Sean, what about on the ground or any debris that has hit down there?

My vantage point is too far from the World Trade Center to make any determination of that.

Did you see any smoke, any flames coming out of engines of that plane?

No, I did not. The plane just was coming in low, and the wingtips tilted back and forth, and it flattened out. It looks like it hit at a slight angle into the World Trade Center. I can see flames coming out of the side of the building, and smoke continues to billow.

Generally, is that a trafficked area in New York for aircraft?

It is not a normal flight pattern. I'm a frequent traveler between Atlanta and New York for business, and it is not a normal flight pattern to come directly over Manhattan. Usually, they come up either over the Hudson River, heading north, and pass alongside, beyond Manhattan, or if they are taking off from LaGuardia, they usually take off over Shea Stadium and gain altitude around the island of Manhattan. It is rare you have a jet crossing directly over the island of Manhattan.

For our viewers who are just tuning in right now, you are looking at live pictures of the World Trade Center tower, where, according to eyewitness Sean Murtagh, the vice president of finance and eyewitness to what he describes as a twin-engine plane or possibly a 737 passenger jet, flying into the World Trade Center. It appears to be still embedded inside the building.

Sean, are you in a position to hear whether any

sirens are going, any ambulances, any response to this yet?

Not from my vantage point. I am probably one and a half to two miles miles from the World Trade Center.

It is a remarkable scene. Flames are still coming out of the windows, black smoke is billowing from what appears to be all sides. Obviously, windows are shattered and steel is jutting out from the structure right now.

Sean, we are looking at these pictures.

Yes. I see them in my office. I have them on all my TVs.

And you are telling us you believe the plane remains embedded?

I can't tell from my vantage point.

Sean, thank you so much for your eyewitness account there.

Right now, we want to go to our affiliate NY1, reporting on this as we speak.

...a little girl in his arms?

Did you see what happened, sir? Did you see what happened? What happened?

I was in the PATH train, and there was a huge explosion sound. Everyone came out. A large section of the building had blown out around the eightieth floor.

Was it hit by something, or was it something inside?

It was inside.

It was inside.

It looked like everything was coming out. All the windows and the papers.

What is on the sidewalk?

I didn't see anything. I just ran, and everyone on the passenger train just ran. I don't know if anyone was hurt, but I assume they were because the windows

were all blown out.

Thank you.

You have to assume a very, very terrible situation if that is indeed the case, because I'm sure there were people up there.

We have lost... Again, our transmitter is on top of the World Trade Center. So we, apparently, have lost contact...

Again, you are looking at pictures now. We understand from our vice president, Sean Murtagh, who was an eyewitness to this, that a commercial jet has crashed into one of the towers of the World Trade Center. You can see the smoke billowing out. There are flames billowing out there, a commercial jet crashing into one of these towers. At this point, we do not have official injury updates to bring you. We are only now beginning to put together the pieces of this horrible incident.

We want to go to an eyewitness on the telephone right now.

Jeanne, what can you tell us what you saw?

I can tell you that I was watching TV, and there was this sonic boom, and the TV went out. And I thought maybe the Concorde was back in service, because I've heard about that sonic boom. And I went to the window—I live in Battery Park City, right next to the Twin Towers—and I looked up, and the side of the World Trade Center exploded. At that point, debris started falling. I couldn't believe what I was watching.

Can you hear anything from your position now—ambulances, sirens?

Absolutely. Positively. There are crowds of people downstairs in Battery Park City. Everybody's come out from the buildings. This is the financial area in

Seven American Deaths and Disasters

By Kenneth Goldsmith

Published by



To be released: **March 2013**

This PDF of **Seven American Deaths and Disasters**
is only a preview and an uncorrected proof.

Lifting images from mechanical files is strictly prohibited.

To see the complete version, please contact Nina Ventura,
Publicist: nina@powerHouseBooks.com