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Pandemic Dispatch: Looking to the Past

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Pandemic Dispatch: Looking to the Past

Rev. J. A. Schneibel, CSC, University Archivist
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We are a college Archives and Museum, and so in the new circumstances of a public health crisis, remote learning transitions, and pattern-disruption across the school, we were assigned the task of capturing the COVID-19 coronavirus experience at our campus. Despite the fact that current-events is outside our bailiwick. All of this four months ago, and the infection-cycle still changing and challenging plans and assumptions day by day.

We discovered that COVID-19 would reduce us to watch and wait; inactive and passive. We looked for something more to do, something more proactive, positive, and encouraging. (And of course I had no thought that we would be sharing this project as a model, because we all surely hoped that by summer as our institutions prepare for the new academic year we would be nearer the borders of this limbo-land.) We came up with the following as a series of rapid-response placeholders to provide content that might address current circumstances.

The University of Portland is a century-old, private, regional Catholic university. We went to the past to look for guidance and hope about our present. What follows is a very short description of a high-yield, profitable Museum outreach series. Because, of course, as the months go on, what were initially intended as ephemeral response to a momentary disruption have acquired gravity and salience as the changes and adjustments of our usual-lives grow into the altered patterns of a new-normal.

Simply put, what we did in the Archives and Museum was to look back in order to illustrate, *from a distance*, the central values and purpose of our continuing work as university educators. We simply reproduced the front-pages of the campus newspaper that reacted to four moments of national disruption from the last eighty years. Providing a minimum of necessary content, but withholding comment, we let the students of

Beacon's Future Explained, Certain Limitations Imposed

In case there is any apprehension over what the future will hold for Portland students, let us state right now that The Beacon will continue to be published.

As is to be expected in times like these we find it necessary to adopt a policy but this policy will only be to do what we have always done; record the news of the Portland campus to the best of our ability. We do not feel it necessary to comment at any great length on war news or any other phases of the war. There are available to all students at least two widely circulating local daily

newspapers, if not more, and innumerable radio programs devoted to complete and speedy recording of war news.

As was suggested by Father Miltner in the convocation address of last Wednesday, economy is imperative. Therefore since we will have a limited space we feel it our duty to devote that space to items of local interest and not to clutter the pages of our paper with news that can be obtained elsewhere.

From time to time editorials may appear in our columns pertaining to

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the war but these will be at the discretion of the writer and not a regular feature of the paper. In addition references to the war will occur in ordinary news stories but again this will be a matter of necessity and not of policy.

As in the past the columns of The Beacon will be open to any one desiring to send a letter to the editor. If at any time a student feels called upon to express his personal opinion in print we will accept it provided he signs his full name to the letter.

the past speak to our fears and concerns of today. We digitized the old newspapers, creating Wordpress web-pages which were also adapted and posted on Facebook. The messages are striking.

We did not try for clever, going instead for the OBVIOUS. The campus newspaper, **The Beacon**, is published weekly; so, the front page for December 12, 1961—reacting to the Pearl Harbor attack. The newspaper bookends for the summer of 1945; (the last edition of the old school year in May, the first news with the World War concluded in October). The Kennedy Assassination. And the post- 9 / 11 front page in 2001.

There were two [editorials in the 1941 paper](#), the president of the school calling the community to sober sacrifice and renewed purpose. A student voice underscoring the seriousness of the moment, the helplessness of the community, the social norms of strength, resilience and civic purpose in a time of expectancy, readiness, and waiting. The policy statement published on the front page sets out to stabilize and normalize college life in the new circumstances, and though stretched and challenged, the student statements encourage confidence in community values as the forward program.

As a Catholic college, the Kennedy assassination struck harder. Here campus rushed a special edition, published on a Saturday, the day after the President's death. An expression of grief along with a testimony of prayer.

[Coverage of the Twin Towers attack](#) of 2001 returns again to the themes of prayer, strength, resilience, and civic purpose. The examples serve as testaments of character, speaking for the student-editors and journalists, and for the institution of higher learning those students represent. Our predecessors' witness and advice remind us today of the powerful inheritance of adaptability and purpose we might rely on to chart our actions and responses meeting the current challenge of the global and local pandemic.

UNIVERSITY MOURNS PRESIDENT'S DEATH

Letter from the President of the University

The most eloquent and profound reaction to the tragic news of President Kennedy's assassination was the almost spontaneous surge of virtually the entire student body to the Mass for the repose of his soul just moments after the news of his death had arrived.

All of us recognize the loss we as a nation and the rest of the world has suffered. He died for his country and the world. May God grant him eternal rest.

Rev. Paul E. Waldschmidt, C.S.C.

THE BEACON

Vol. LXII, No. 9 UNIVERSITY OF PORTLAND, PORTLAND, OREGON Saturday, November 23, 1963

'Loneliest Job in the World'



"'LONELIEST JOB IN THE WORLD,' prize-winning photo by N. Y. Times photographer George James, reads few words to tell the President's story.

A telegram was sent to the White House soon after the death of the President. It read "We extend our sincerest sympathy in the face of this tragic incident. A keynote mass was immediately celebrated on campus."

The ASDP Executive Council and students of the University of Portland.

Shooting News Shocks Campus

By Don Yout

The clock on the wall read 10:43 a.m.

Like on the campus of the University of Portland was typical of any Friday, students drawing near the end of their 10 o'clock classes looking forward to that restful hour between 11 and 1 p.m. and possibly anticipating events of the coming weekend.

Minutes later the situation had drastically changed. The extensive news media of our modern society brought us reports of the shooting of the President of the United States and Texas Governor John L. Connally in downtown Dallas, Texas.

Students immediately flooded

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Eulogy On J.F.K.

By Joe Ballard

I am partial to the man who first died at our feet, on Black Friday 1961, and I proudly condense it. I discover that I am reflecting on his approach to the parsonage issues of our time, so much as those seemingly "have and done" manifestations of what JFK was really like.

I remember his meek and modest "Thank you for coming," as he shook a hundred education-enthusiastic hands and a web of airports greeted. Just after the election, I remember him wandering through rows of canned food in a suburban shopping center searching for the "Lorraine's" version.

"Hello, my name is John Kennedy," I remember him uncharacteristically putting his top hat back on at the inauguration. I recall his jovial afternoon during the European tour at a tea party in

the village green, surrounded by the local Irish mistrieks. I remember a photo of him and Jacqueline arriving, hand and hand down a New England beach, while the votes were being counted. I recall his famous escape through the streets of Washington to pay a call to Walter Lippman, thoroughly evading his secret Service shadow. I remember him attending Mass at the oldest cathedral in Vienna, before his conference with Mr. K.

If you would claim that he failed to communicate with the people on the issues at hand, remember his address to the nation during the Cuban crisis, and his speech to the West Germans. If you would claim that he promoted a shabby Lincoln image with "the packing their rifles," remember

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The Solemn Reminder



STRIKING REMINDER of President Kennedy's death throughout Friday afternoon was the A.P.H.O.T.C. flag flying at half-staff.

Reporting the Kennedy Assassination, 1963