

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, June 3, 2013

Eight Days in November 1963: The Delaware and Maryland Turnpikes, soon to become a portion of Interstate 95, were about to be dedicated at the state line southwest of Newark, and the ceremony was scheduled for November 14, 1963. Governor J. Millard Tawes of Maryland and Governor Elbert N. Carvel of Delaware both planned to be there, and President John F. Kennedy was to give the dedication address. A speaker's platform was set up on the southeast side of the newly completed highway straddling the state line. The public was invited to witness the occasion and could park on the turnpike, as it was not yet open to traffic. Along with the seven-member Greenplate family, I parked nearly a mile away and walked to the place of importance. The governors were on hand, and President Kennedy arrived by helicopter from Washington, setting down in the field just behind the speaker's platform. I stood about 50 feet away with my left foot in Delaware and my right foot in Maryland. The P.A. system did not work well, so I could barely hear the remarks, but it was a great vantage point. Kennedy was dressed in a business suit with white shirt and tie and a long black overcoat. With the dedication over, his helicopter took him to New Castle Airport, where he boarded Air Force One for New York. The turnpike opened for traffic the next day.

On November 19, five days later, the centennial of Lincoln's famous address, a ceremony was planned in the National Cemetery at Gettysburg to commemorate the occasion. Joseph Mitchell, Lindsay Greenplate, and I drove to the site to take it in. A platform had been erected a few yards from Lincoln's actual location, and ex-President Eisenhower, then Gettysburg's most famous resident, was to be the featured speaker. The crowd was sparse, and it was easy to get very close to the stage. Ike and Mamie, the latter dressed in red, accompanied by Pennsylvania's Governor William W. Scranton and his wife arrived by limousine. Marian Anderson sang the National Anthem, Justice Musmano of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court recited the Gettysburg Address, and the Marine Corps Band played the Battle Hymn of the Republic. Scranton introduced General Eisenhower, and Ike spoke briefly. President Kennedy sent his regrets. Although we didn't actually shake hands, it was a very nice and intimate occasion.

Along Interstate 95 at Delaware Exit 3, Walter Anderson and I were pushing to get our new Holiday Inn open as soon as possible, and at noon on November 22, we had been at the site inspecting the construction. On our way back to Concord Pike, where our first inn had been open for over two years, we stopped at Howard Johnson's Restaurant at Kirkwood Highway and Limestone Road (now Crossroads Restaurant) for lunch. Word came over the radio that President Kennedy had been shot in Dallas, and by the time we got back to our destination, we knew he was dead. He had had a busy travel schedule from the time we had seen him on November 14, shaking hands in the streets of New York and Boston, among other things. Within days, I-95 was renamed the John F. Kennedy Memorial Turnpike.