

Interview: David Von Pein, Curator of his YouTube 'JFK Channel'

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on November 22, 2021 - 3:22pm

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CHICAGO – At 12:30pm Central Time on November 22nd, 1963, President John F. Kennedy was killed by an assassin's bullet. The three shots that echoed through Dealey Plaza in Dallas, Texas, has resonated for years, but beyond the actual event there was a treasure trove of TV and radio coverage that was recorded. David Von Pein has collected this coverage and it can be found on his comprehensive YouTube channel. Click [JFK CHANNEL](#) [25] to start browsing.

Not only has David Von Pein found high quality as-it-happened video from the three major networks at the time – CBS-TV, NBC-TV and ABC-TV – but the channel also contains the local Dallas coverage (TV and radio) and a collection of radio coverage from different markets, special programming and post assassination coverage ... including the killing of JFK alleged assassin (Lee Harvey Oswald), and JFK's funeral. The depth, breadth and dive into this media is a revealing time machine, both in being within the midst of the events and the state of the journalism of the time, including an important step in television news coverage that preceded and predicted the future 24/7 news cycle.



Walter Cronkite Delivers the 'News' on November 22nd, 1963
Photo credit: CBS-TV

I've been a fan of the channel for many years, and I continue to visit for the updates or to re-listen or re-watch the hours and hours of broadcasting, learning more about the times of the assassination and the atmosphere that the media created. The television news teams 58 years ago were best described as "radio on the air," as abilities to go live to an event was hampered by the overwhelming bulk of cameras and remote broadcasting capabilities in the pre-digital age. Yet, NBC-TV was able to show the Lee Harvey Oswald killing live (still chilling) and the technology of "instant replay," which was to make its debut at a college football game in December of 1963, was then utilized to re-show a murder on television.

In my interview with curator David Von Pein we talk about his journey within all things assassination-related and John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

HollywoodChicago.com: The depth, breadth and comprehension of your YouTube channel on the assassination of John F. Kennedy continues to astound me. In collecting all this audio/video ephemera what strikes you about the state of the U.S. and the world on November 22nd, 1963, and what do you think it reveals to us today?

David Von Pein: This is probably going to sound silly and naive, but whenever I watch or listen to anything from my JFK Assassination audio and video collection, I often can't help but think to myself how much 'better' everything seemed to be back in the early 1960s. I think perhaps I belong permanently in the Kennedy era of the '60s. And my fixation on JFK material and the other videos focusing on that decade would tend to support my last statement.

Things in the 1960s seemed to be simpler. People dressed nicer. People talked better, using less slang and much better grammar than today ... for the most part. There were no smartphones in everybody's hands, no personal computers, no \$50,000 SUVs with GPS, no 55-inch HD televisions, no amazon.com and no Office of Homeland Security.

HollywoodChicago.com: So that simplicity sounds better to you?

Von Pein: Mind you, I'm not knocking all those electronic gadgets that we have in today's world that didn't exist in 1963. Oh no, not at all! I love my new 50-inch Toshiba LED 4K UHD Smart FireTV television set. It's great. And I don't know how I could survive for even a single day without my PC. I'd be totally lost without that contraption ... and I'd probably be forced to commit hari-kari if I had to go more than two days without hearing the dulcet tones of the Microsoft Windows start-up theme music.

So from strictly a technological standpoint, the world we live in today certainly beats out JFK's era by a mile or more. I was just attempting to comment on how different and simpler – and less mechanical – everything was back in 1963.

HollywoodChicago.com: What about the political divisiveness in comparing the 1963 to now?

Von Pein: I don't really have an opinion about the 'politics' of 1963 vs. the political situation as it exists today in 2021. I'm not a political person at all. I stay away from discussions regarding politics as much as I can. But I will say this ... I think we lost one of the best Presidents this country ever had when Lee Harvey Oswald fired those three shots at John F. Kennedy on November 22, 1963.

HollywoodChicago.com: In a previous interview that you've done, you ruminated on the strangeness of the "Father Knows Best" episode that gets interrupted by the ABC bulletin on the assassination, and then is returned to complete before they go to their 24/7 coverage. In the other audio or video within the collection, can you point toward any other instance where the initial bulletin is proclaimed, and then the 'normal' programming is resumed to strike a before and after ironic note?

Von Pein: Well, I don't know about the 'ironic note' part of this, but there are other examples of television and radio stations and networks resuming their regular programming on 11/22/63 after delivering their initial bulletins on the Presidential shooting. A good example of this happening comes from the CBS-TV. On November 22nd, when the normal CBS soap opera that was airing between 12:30 and 1:00 PM [CST] – "As The World Turns" – was interrupted at 12:40 PM [CST] by Walter Cronkite's first voice-over bulletin about the assassination attempt that had just occurred minutes earlier. That first CBS-TV bulletin lasted for precisely 59 seconds, with CBS then going back to regular programming with a Nescafe coffee commercial.

HollywoodChicago.com: How about radio?

Von Pein: One notable instance of regular Friday programming being resumed on 11/22/63 after the first bulletin was aired include the coverage of the ABC Radio Network. [Note: The resumption of the regular program that was interrupted by Don Gardiner, however, is not heard on my archived version of the ABC Radio broadcast. But it is clear from Gardiner's words that the day's regular programming was being resumed for at least a brief period following ABC Radio's very first bulletin concerning the shooting].

By the way, ABC radio was the first media outlet – at 12:36p, six minutes after the shots were fired – to air the bulletin that beat all other national radio and television networks to the punch on November 22nd.



ABC Radio Was the First to Break the JFK story on November 22nd, 1963

Photo credit: ABC Radio

HollywoodChicago.com: Speaking of radio, which most casual searchers of media from the day don't consider, what was one of your best finds in that area of broadcast?

Von Pein: The WTIC audio [Hartford, Connecticut] has become one of my very favorite assassination-related media before-and-after examples. The radio call-in show that was being aired was filled with average and unremarkable topics like cake recipes, dog clipping and a caller giving advice on keeping garbage cans clean. Then at 12:55pm CST the first bulletin was broadcast, and after that the world changed forever.

It was first made available in 2013 on YouTube by Doug Bertel, the son of Dick Bartel, one of the WTIC announcers ... who can be heard during the November 22nd Hartford coverage.

HollywoodChicago.com: You also include a nice collection of John F. Kennedy coverage before and during his administration. What is your favorite piece of coverage or moment in that collection that you think captures the spirit of the man?

Von Pein: I think my all-time favorite "JFK moment" is a speech that President Kennedy made at Madison Square Garden in New York City on May 20, 1962. It's his "Medical Care For The Aged" speech, and it's simply fantastic. It almost looks like he's ad-libbing the whole 25-minute talk. [Click [SPEECH](#) [26] for the remarks].

GO TO PAGE TWO for the David Von Pein's rare broadcast finds over the years, and more perspective on November 22nd, 1963.

HollywoodChicago.com: What was the circumstance of you obtaining the rare audio of the first JFK bulletins on NBC-TV, only recorded because an engineer was testing his equipment that morning?

Von Pein: The name of the man who recorded that rare NBC-TV audio is Phil Gries, an avid collector of archival television audio. He had his audio tape recorder set up next to his television set at his home on Friday, November 22, 1963. He had just finished recording the audio of a program called "Tell Us More," which aired that day from 12:00 to 12:30 PM [CST] on WNBC-TV in New York City.

At 1:45 PM, he noticed an "NBC Bulletin" slide come on the screen, interrupting the program ["Bachelor Father"] that was airing at the time on WNBC. Phil then quickly hit the "record" button on his tape recorder and was able to tape announcer Don Pardo's first two bulletins concerning the shooting of President Kennedy, plus the next four minutes of NBC-TV's coverage of the unfolding tragedy taking place in Dallas.

My acquisition of a digital copy of Phil's original 'lost' NBC-TV bulletins came about on November 21, 2013, just one day prior to the 50th anniversary of the assassination.

HollywoodChicago.com: You do occasionally update the page with new material. What has been one of your latest and greatest finds in association with the assassination broadcasts and what was the circumstance of unearthing it?

Von Pein: I guess I'd have to say it's the 'new and improved' version of the NBC-TV coverage in the last link I just provided in my last answer above. That 'improved' coverage has much higher quality video resolution than my previous online versions of the same material. I acquired

that enhanced version of the NBC material from an anonymous individual on Facebook in November of 2015. He was kind enough to send me the video through a file-sharing service at no cost at all.

The picture quality he was able to extract for his finished video is quite good, especially since he told me he had merely used two different VHS tape sources to work with to do his enhancements. I have no idea how he achieved the excellent PQ he produced, with only old VHS tapes to work with ... but I thank him for it, whoever he is.

HollywoodChicago.com: What in the hours of broadcasting, both on TV and radio, do you think are the weirdest moments, either in an on-air gaffe or unnecessary over-editorializing in the midst of the assassination and related events?

Von Pein: There are several odd gaffes by the media that occurred during the weekend of the assassination. The easiest way to answer this question is to provide a link to the specific topic ... click [ERRORS](#) [27] for the audio and video clips.



The David Von Pein JFK Channel

Photo credit: YouTube

HollywoodChicago.com: Finally, I was born in 1960, you were born in 1961. Given we were toddlers when the assassination took place, how do you think it affected our generation as an event in the background of our subsequent lives?

Von Pein: I wish I could peer into a crystal ball, so I could find out how the majority of people would answer that question. But as for me personally, I'd have to say that it has affected my life perhaps quite a bit more than most other people, simply due to the fact that I have immersed myself deeply in the subjects of John F. Kennedy and his assassination for much of the last 20 plus years.

But for most people of our generation – those born in the early 1960s – I doubt that JFK's assassination has really had a huge impact upon their lives.

HollywoodChicago.com: So you find it was the slightly older folks who took the brunt of the news?

Von Pein: As for the previous generations – people born in the first half of the 20th Century – I've heard them say that President Kennedy's death affected them much more profoundly, due to the fact that they remember the time when JFK was alive and was President of the United States.

And, of course, most of those people can also vividly remember exactly where they were and what they were doing when they heard the awful news on November 22, 1963. It affected many of them very deeply, as they felt they had actually lost someone very close to them personally. You and I, Patrick, don't have such memories. And maybe it's for the best that we don't. It spares us the burden of dealing with the tragic memories of that terrible Friday in Dallas.

For David Von Pein's version of this interview, click [PATRICK & DAVID](#) [28]. David Von Pein also has other channels on YouTube, click [DVP](#) [29] for links.

By [PATRICK McDONALD](#) [31]
Editor and Film Writer
HollywoodChicago.com
pat@hollywoodchicago.com [30]



[30]

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