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The first book ever to examine the hundreds of thousands of condolence letters, archived in the JFK Library, that were written to Jacqueline Kennedy after her husband's assassination devastated the nation

**LETTERS TO JACKIE:
Condolences from a Grieving Nation
Ellen Fitzpatrick**

“This is a terrific, original, and important work, the perfect match between subject and author. With an historian’s grasp of time and place and a novelist’s feel for drama and detail, Fitzpatrick provides a stunningly fresh look at the impact of JFK’s assassination on the American people.”

— Doris Kearns Goodwin

“Ellen Fitzpatrick’s wonderful book — which is both a perceptive history of the public response to John Kennedy’s death and a selection of the millions of letters that followed the assassination — is a remarkable window into the character of the nation in the 1960s.”

— Alan Brinkley

The assassination of President Kennedy is perhaps the most memorable moment of the 20th century—a moment that left a family and a nation in mourning, a moment that many recall as their first historical memory. Within seven weeks of the President’s death, Jacqueline Kennedy received over 800,000 condolence letters. Two years later, the volume of correspondence would exceed a million and a half letters. And for the next 46 years, the letters would remain essentially untouched.

In **LETTERS TO JACKIE: Condolences from a Grieving Nation**, Ellen Fitzpatrick, the Carpenter Professor of History at the University of New Hampshire, culls about 250 of these extraordinary letters into three parts: Americans’ vivid recollections of November 22, 1963; their views on politics, society and the office of The Presidency; and personal experiences of grief and loss. These letters reflect a more innocent time exploded by tragedy, the complex balance of prejudice and tolerance at the dawn of the Civil Rights movement, patriotism unchecked by politics, faith or race, the culture, shaped by tradition and yet on the precipice of change, and the sense of the American family that Kennedy fostered, a family of millions who saw him as their father.

Rare in their richness and breadth, the letters are a remarkable human record that perfectly preserves the heart-wrenching grief and the unwavering faith of the nation in a time of crisis. Written in the extraordinary eloquence of so-called “ordinary” Americans—on elegant stationary, in poor handwriting, in pencil, in type, on simple lined writing paper, from across generations, nationalities,

racism, and religions—the letters capture what John F. Kennedy meant to the country, and how his death divided American history into before and after.

Fitzpatrick draws comparisons between Kennedy's time and our own—and, as a nation, we can still hear the echoes of the immense sorrow that marked 1963. To see how we have changed as a nation is to see how the idealism and hope inspired by the brief but potent, even enchanted Kennedy presidency has shaped us, even those who were born long after that terrible November day. And to revisit that grief is to be reminded that what it is to be an American.

Fitzpatrick's **LETTERS TO JACKIE** is the first book to ever examine this extraordinary collection of letters and to create an incredible portrait of the nation's grief from such a cross-section of American life.

Fitzpatrick will be presenting at the Newburyport Literary Festival (NLF) on April 24, 2010. Learn more about Fitzpatrick and her participation at the NLF at www.newburyportliteraryfestival.org.

About the Author: **Ellen Fitzpatrick**, a professor and scholar specializing in modern American political and intellectual history, is the author and editor of six books and has appeared regularly on PBS's "The News Hour with Jim Lehrer." She received her PhD in history from Brandeis University and has been interviewed as an expert on modern American political history by the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Los Angeles Times*, *USA Today*, *Boston Globe*, *Washington Post*, CBS's "Face the Nation," and National Public Radio. The Carpenter Professor of History at the University of New Hampshire, where she has been recognized for Excellence in Public Service, Fitzpatrick lives in Newton, Massachusetts.

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