

ISCHUA VALLEY

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PRESIDENT KENNEDY SMILED AT ME

It was a Sunday afternoon, in October of 1962. I was a freshman at Buffalo State College and my family decided to go to the [Pulaski Day Parade](#). President Kennedy was coming for the event. Everyone was eager to catch a glimpse of the young President but his route through the city was kept secret. My parents and siblings chose to take one route but I chose another and went into the Black neighborhood. Somehow I felt that this was the area he would drive through.

I stood along the sidewalk with a large crowd and realized that a truck driver and I were the only white people there. Remember what life was like then before the Civil Rights Movement.

A huge convertible came down the street and suddenly stopped in front of me. Sitting on the top of the back seat was the President, in full view of the crowd, with two men seated on either side of him. He was only about eight feet away from me. He was wearing a grey suit with a very slim white strip running through it. The shirt was white and his tie a deep burgundy. He was very tan, having just returned from a vacation at Hyannis Port. His brown hair had streaks of gold and I was surprised to notice he had light freckles scattered over his cheeks and nose. He scanned the crowd, waved and looked at me. He turned and then suddenly looked back at me. I noticed his eyes were blue-grey.

He smiled at me. Maybe he realized that I wasn't afraid to be in the neighborhood as the only white person besides the truck driver. That moment and smile forever remain in my mind.

Suddenly the limo moved on and he was gone. I wondered at the time if it was safe for the President to sit so openly, exposed to the world. That thought came back to me on November 22, 1963 when his lack of fear for his safety led to his assassination.

