

## **Chapter 2**

### **Presentation of Robert Kelley, President of the University of North Dakota, at the Eternal Flame Memorial Ceremony, JFK Conference, September 23, 2008 [1]**

On November 22nd in 1963, I was leaving my college cafeteria when a friend approached me and breathlessly told me that President Kennedy had just been shot just down the road from where I was in Dallas. I did not learn until later that evening the details of that moment and that the country had lost its President and young leader to an assassin's bullet. As all Americans of that generation, I have never forgotten it. Through the remainder of my student years at the University California at Berkeley, and through the remainder of the decade of the 60's, I felt acutely the loss of JFK and his leadership.

Some few weeks before his death, President John Fitzgerald Kennedy visited the University of North Dakota and the city of Grand Forks. The visit was part of a five day tour of the United States addressing a variety of domestic projects, managing the nation's natural resources, among these projects was the Garrison Dam on the Missouri River, which created Lake Sakakawea. During his address to the campus he remembered Teddy Roosevelt and his love for North Dakota. In his speech, JFK looked ahead to the year 2000, when he estimated that some 350 million people would rely on the country's natural resources.

Kennedy said at that time, quote, "Unless we make the proper decisions today on how we shall use our water, and our air, and our land, and our oceans, unless we make the comparable effort, an effort comparable to what Theodore Roosevelt and others made 50 years ago, we are going to waste it." Kennedy concluded his address that morning with the following thought: I urge those of you who are students here to recognize the obligation which any educated man or woman must bear to society as a whole. This school was not developed merely to give its graduates an economic advantage in the life struggle. We do not seek merely, I'm sure, at this school, to graduate lawyers, farmers, doctors, who may lead their communities in income. What we seek to advance, what we seek to develop in all of our colleges and universities are educated men and women who can bear the burdens of responsible scholarship, and citizenship, who can make judgments about life as it is, and as it must be, and encourage the people to make those decisions which could bring not only prosperity and security, but happiness to the people of the United States and those who depend upon it."

These words were true in 1963 and they are true in 2008. It's an honor to remember the life and contributions of John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

1. The presentation by Dr. Kelley was recorded by Sean Windingland, and along with many of the other presentations at the JFK Conference, placed on Youtube. Using the recording preserved by Windingland on Youtube, John Delane Williams transcribed Dr. Kelley's presentation.