

**ONCE UPON A TIME IN NORTH PARK  
JOHN F. KENNEDY VISITS IN 1963  
BY BILL VIVIAN**

As the fall 2008 Presidential elections approach, we are reminded of a Presidential visit through North Park in San Diego that took place in the early nineteen sixties. It was July 7, 1963, when this edition of the *San Diego Independent* newspaper featured President John F. Kennedy spending about 4 hours here in San Diego as our guest. Those few hours were spent in a motorcade down El Cajon Boulevard – the political part of the trip; receiving an honorary degree at San Diego State – the educational part of his trip; and observing a military display at MCRD. The President was met by Governor Brown at Lindbergh Field, and then off they went in an eleven-auto, two-bus motorcade for the 12-mile drive to San Diego State.

North Park Historical Society member and lifelong area resident Randy Sappenfield recalls that students in schools near the parade route were excused from their classes to watch the motorcade, providing they had a ticket to the commencement address. He remembers leaving San Diego High with his friends and driving up Park Boulevard in time to see JFK pass by on Washington at the corner of Richmond, and also being surprised that the young President's hair appeared much redder in reality than in magazine photos. We appreciate Randy keeping this ticket and the news clippings on the next few pages for all these years.



When the President's motorcade reached Park and El Cajon Boulevards, it slowed to a crawl before the 8-mile route down El Cajon Boulevard, past a purported quarter of a million people, which included democratic sign-waving clubs, high school bands, protesters, residents, law enforcement officers, and a reviewing stand packed with dignitaries.

While at San Diego State, he received the first Honorary Doctor of Law Degree awarded by the California State Colleges. He then departed by helicopter to MCRD, where the President toured the aircraft carriers Kitty Hawk and Oriskany before departing. Quite the whirlwind tour in Paradise, I would say!

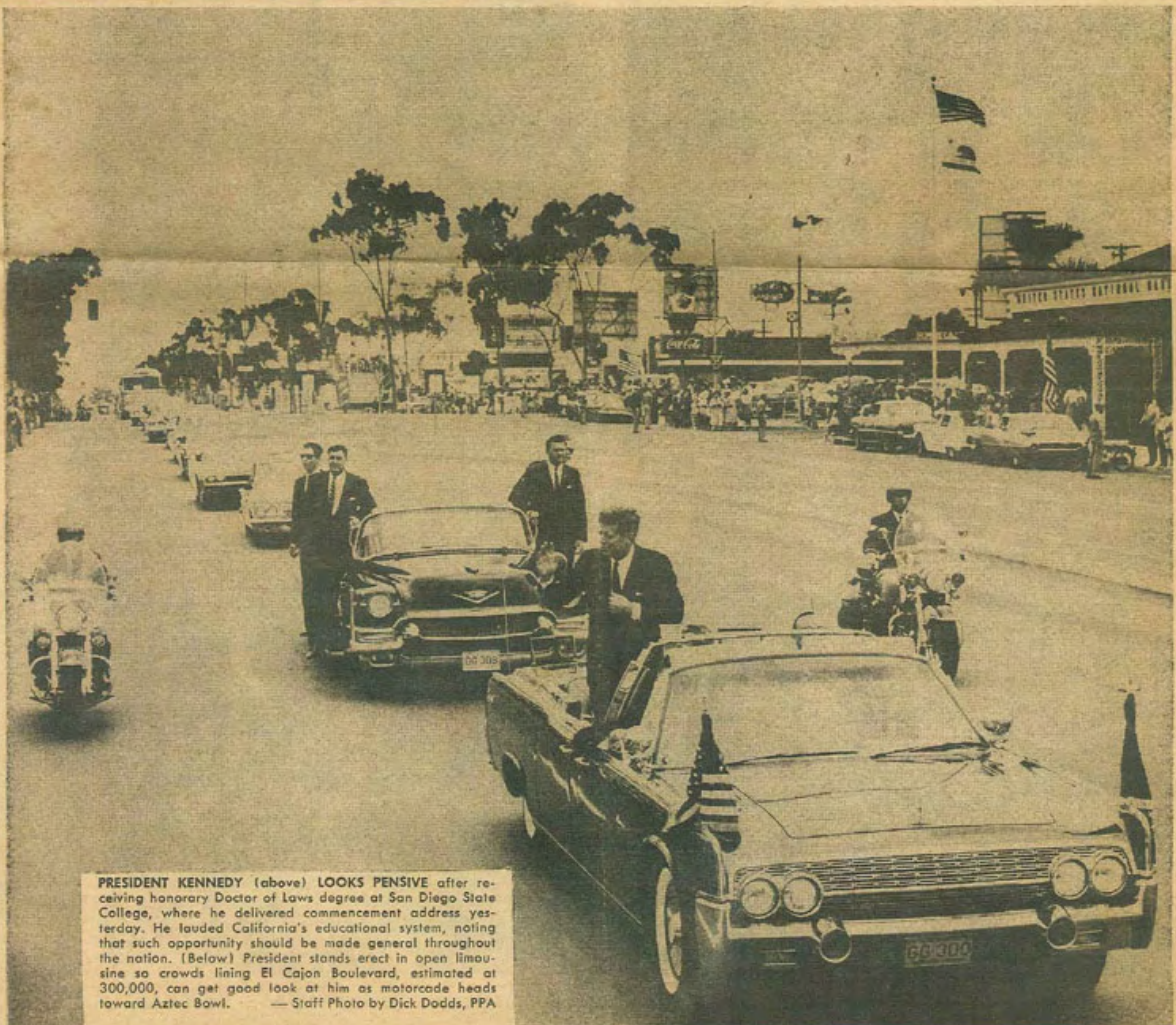


# Independent

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## Hail to The Chief



PRESIDENT KENNEDY (above) LOOKS PENSIVE after receiving honorary Doctor of Laws degree at San Diego State College, where he delivered commencement address yesterday. He lauded California's educational system, noting that such opportunity should be made general throughout the nation. (Below) President stands erect in open limousine so crowds lining El Cajon Boulevard, estimated at 300,000, can get good look at him as motorcade heads toward Aztec Bowl. — Staff Photo by Dick Dodds, PPA

San Diego Independent, June 7, 1963  
News clipping courtesy of Randy Sappenfield



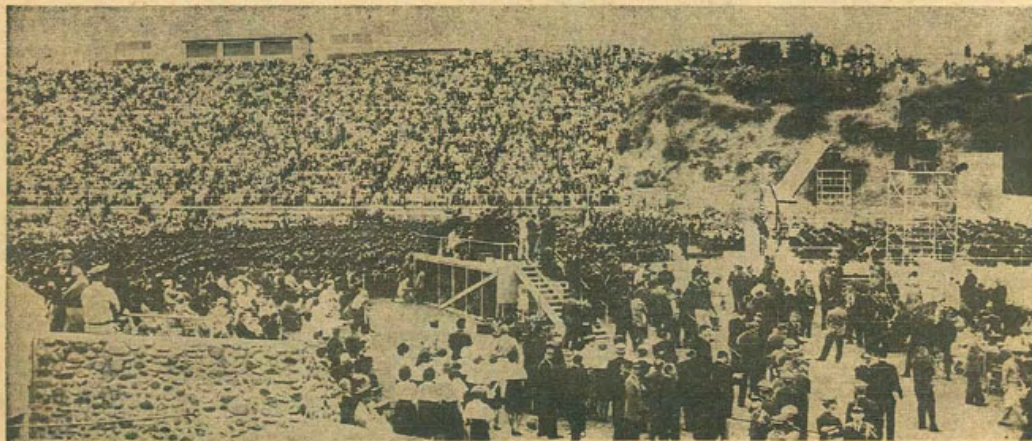
# Candid Views as President Toured San Diego



REPRESENTATIVES OF EVERY TYPE OF news media, military and civil dignitaries swarmed about President Kennedy on his arrival at Lindbergh Field, San Diego, yesterday morning. Press representatives were present by the hundreds, including local newspapers, TV and radio stations, and full complement of White House representatives. — Staff Photo



HAVING RECEIVED HIS HONORARY DEGREE, made his address to graduating class at San Diego State College, posed for press photographers and shaken hands with numerous "fans," President Kennedy pauses just before boarding helicopter to U. S. Marine Corps Recruit Depot where he inspected Marine recruits undergoing training. — Staff Photo



TIER AFTER TIER OF SPECTATORS jammed Aztec Bowl to hear President Kennedy address graduating class of 2,097 San Diego State College students at 65th Commencement exercises. Chief executive received an honor-

ary Doctor of Laws degree, first honorary degree ever to be bestowed by California state colleges.

— Staff Photo