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Fifty years after Jacqueline Kennedy went on national television to thank Americans for their condolence letters following her husband's assassination, the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum has released some of those letters.

Keywords

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Citation

MLA
"JFK Library Releases Letters of Sympathy to Jackie Kennedy." Andrea Mitchell, correspondent. NBC
JFK Library Releases Letters of Sympathy to Jackie Kennedy

BRIAN WILLIAMS, anchor:
It was 50 years ago tonight Jacqueline Kennedy still mourning her late husband went on national television to thank Americans for their expressions of condolences. Today, the Kennedy Library released some of those moving and heartfelt letters for the first time ever. The story tonight from NBC’s Andrea Mitchell.

ANDREA MITCHELL, reporting:
She had been widowed for only 53 days, less than two months since the assassination, joined by her husband’s brothers, Bobby and Teddy wearing black. Her only jewelry, her gold wedding band. Jacqueline Kennedy spoke to the nation for the first time since that terrible day in Dallas. Thanking the nearly 800,000 people whose letters of condolence had poured into the White House.

JACQUELINE KENNEDY: The warmth of these tributes is something I shall never forget.

MITCHELL: Released today a time capsule of comfort and pain, 22,000 letters so moving, so personal, they were set aside to be answered individually. For carpenter in Paterson, New Jersey, who made a bust of JFK for his garden. Miss Princess's French class in Woonsocket, Rhode Island. Ten year-old Bridget Fathie Bear from Lake Charles, Louisiana. She wrote, "Mrs. Kennedy, I would love for you and your children to come over to our house when you’re not busy." And in a Canyon village, the toddler named Kennedy after the President. JFK had just sent his namesake a signed picture from the White House. It arrived two days after he was the killed, but most poignant of all, the letter from Maxine McNair, mother of Denise McNair, one of the young girls killed five months earlier in the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, "Dear Mrs. Kennedy, when the tragic news came across the airwaves, again my heart said, it isn’t true. It didn’t happen."

MAXINE MCNAIR: "Isn't it strange how people with so much to give to the world are taken?"
MITCHELL: Mrs. McNair today on why she was moved to write.
MCNAIR: I was hoping it would give her some comfort because I got a lot of comfort from the letters that
people wrote me.
MITCHELL: Two women, a world apart, brought together by the shock and pain of violent sudden loss.
KENNEDY: May I thank you again on behalf of my children and of the President’s family for the comfort that your letters have brought to us all.