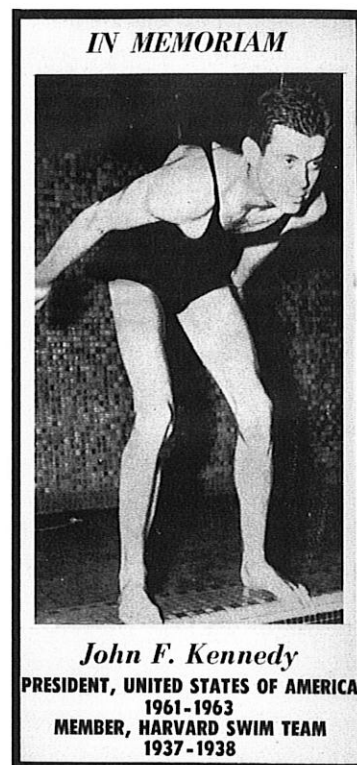


JOHN F. KENNEDY

Around two o'clock in the morning on August 2, 1943, John F. Kennedy was in command of torpedo boat PT-109, searching for a Japanese convoy in a channel known as the Tokyo Express off the Solomon Islands in the south Pacific. It was a moonless night and Kennedy's boat was idling on one engine to avoid detection of her wake by Japanese aircraft. Out of the blackness a Japanese destroyer was spotted by the crew heading toward them at a high rate of speed. With no time to get the engines up to speed, PT-109 was cut in half by the destroyer.



Kennedy, who had swam at Harvard under Bob Muir, who later coached the 1956 US Team, at Melbourne, was at home in the water. He organized the nine surviving crewmen, put non-swimmers on a plank and led them on a four mile swim to a small deserted island, even towing one of the wounded men in a life jacket by a belt through his teeth. The island had no food or water, so Kennedy swam more miles alone in the shark infested waters, first back into the channel hoping to find another PT boat and then to find another island that was more habitable. Finding one, he led the crew on another swim to that island and eventually was rescued.

AND PT-109



The Silver Star Kennedy received for his actions helped launch his political career and after he became President, the incident was thoroughly studied and celebrated, becoming a cultural phenomenon inspiring a song, many books, movies, television series and collectible objects and toys.



Lt. JOHN F. KENNEDY, USNR
(Harvard University)

Navy and Marine Corps Medal
