

**Herbert W. Klotz Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 05/18/1964**  
Administrative Information

**Creator:** Herbert W. Klotz

**Interviewer:** Dan Jacobs

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**Biographical Note**

Herbert W. Klotz (1917-1986) was a member of the Businessman's Committee for Kennedy-Johnson during the 1960 presidential campaign and served as Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Administration from 1962-1965. This interview focuses on the inner workings of the Department of Commerce during the Kennedy administration and organizing an exhibit on past presidents for the New York World's Fair in 1964, among other topics.

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By Herbert W. Klotz

Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Administration

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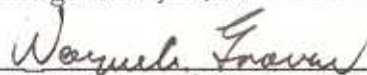
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Herbert W. Klotz

August 31, 1964



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Herbert W. Klotz– JFK #1

Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	First meeting with John F. Kennedy [JFK] in 1939
2	Starting work on the Businessman’s Committee for Kennedy-Johnson
3	Counteracting the Nixon campaign’s propaganda
5	Helping find staff for the Kennedy administration’s Department of Commerce
7	Selection of C. Douglas Dillon as Secretary of the Treasury
8	Appointment as Special Assistant to Luther H. Hodges, Secretary of Commerce
9	JFK’s desire for the Department of Commerce to expand
10	Role of the Department of Commerce
12	Distribution of a Department of Commerce memo instructing employees to give JFK more credit
14	Controversy over the Business Advisory Council
15	Business Advisory Council disassociating itself from the Department of Commerce
16	Steel price rise
17	Appointment as Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Administration
18	Responsibilities working with Congress
21	Department of Commerce’s failure to prepare for Cuban Missile Crisis
22	Improvements in preparedness for emergencies
23	Planning for the New York World’s Fair
24	Designing the Federal Pavilion
25	Criticism of the Federal Pavilion’s proposed design
27	Exhibit on past presidents in the Federal Pavilion
28	Conflict over which presidents to include in exhibit
30	Inclusion of JFK in exhibit after his assassination

Addendum 1: English translation of “A Tribute to John F. Kennedy”

Addendum 2: “Erinnerungen an John F. Kennedy”



Interview with Herbert W. Klotz,  
Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Administration,  
by Dan Jacobs, in Washington, D. C., on May 18, 1964

Jacobs: Mr. Klotz, would you tell us when you first met John F. Kennedy?

Klotz: I first met John F. Kennedy in the winter of 1939. This was shortly after the beginning of the war. My mother, father, and sister were stranded in England; and they had been trying to book passage to the United States. I was under the impression that they were on the S. S. Athenia, which had left Liverpool and a day or so later was reported sunk. Fortunately, it turned out that they were on a different ship, and in my relief I made a rather considerable donation to the United States Ambassador to the Court of St. James, who happened to be John F. Kennedy's father, for the alleviation of the suffering of the survivors of the Athenia disaster. Ambassador Kennedy had put his son Jack in charge of helping these survivors, and we met shortly thereafter when he returned to the United States.

I have always marvelled at President Kennedy's tremendous memory for facts and details of events, even though they may have happened many years ago. When in the winter of 1960 Governor Hodges, who had just been appointed Secretary of Commerce by the President-elect, took me to Mr. Kennedy's house on N Street and introduced me to him (or thought he introduced me to him), Mr. Kennedy said, "Oh yes, I know Herb Klotz very well. I remember as though it were yesterday the donation he made for the survivors of the Athenia disaster".

Mr. Hodges was as flabbergasted as I was that he should have remembered an incident which had happened 21 years earlier and which in his full life could not have been of particular significance to him.

Jacobs: You had not had any contact with him in that intervening period from 1939 to 1960?

Daniel Jacobs  
Daniel Jacobs

Herbert W. Klotz  
Herbert W. Klotz  
Assistant Secretary of Commerce  
for Administration



Klotz: In the intervening period I saw Jack Kennedy from time to time. I was never an intimate friend of his, but to some extent we moved in the same circles, both in New York and Washington. I supported Mr. Kennedy when he first ran for the Senate in 1952 and again in 1958, 6 years later, when he ran for re-election. In the intervening years I lived in New York and he lived in Washington. I didn't see too much of him until he became interested in running for the Presidency. Needless to say, I was with him all the way from the very early days, that is, the primaries in Wisconsin and West Virginia.

Jacobs: Did you attend the convention in 1960?

Klotz: Yes, I went out to Los Angeles and attended the convention. At that time I was not as yet politically active; I was merely a passive participant, but I was one of Senator Kennedy's admirers and greatly elated when he received the nomination. Shortly after the nomination, back in Washington, I went to see his brother Bobby, who is a neighbor of mine in McLean, Virginia, and told him that I would like to work on his brother's staff and do anything that I might be qualified to do to help him win the election.

Bobby asked me whether I had ever met his brother-in-law Sargent Shriver. I said I had not, and he picked up the phone, called him, and told him that I was a friend of the family and that I had indicated my willingness to work for the campaign. At that time Sargent Shriver was in the process of organizing the National Committee of Business and Professional Men and Women for Kennedy-Johnson, of which Governor Hodges, the Governor of North Carolina, had been made Honorary Chairman. Sarge indicated he would be happy to see me.

I went over to see him, and I have been working for the Kennedys, in a way, ever since. I took leave of absence from my job in an investment banking firm in Washington, and started working full time as Associate Director of the Businessmen's Committee for Kennedy-Johnson. The Director of the Committee



had established his office in Chicago, which is Sarge's home, but fairly soon it became evident that the Committee's principal activities would have to be carried out in Washington, where I was in charge of the office.

Our job on that Committee was not so much to engage in fund-raising, which was left largely to the regular organizations; the Democratic National Committee and the Citizens for Kennedy-Johnson, but we were more concerned with spreading the gospel of Senator Kennedy's fiscal soundness and responsibility. The Republican Party was spreading the story that Kennedy would wreck the American economy; that he was dedicated to the principle of spending the country into bankruptcy; that he would devalue the dollar; and many things of that sort. It was our principal objective to counteract that propaganda.

We did so, fairly successfully I believe; through ads which we placed in some of the leading newspapers in the country; through personal letters that we wrote to high officials of banks and investment banking firms, and to Deans of schools of business administration. We even wrote to the heads of some leading financial institutions in Germany, Switzerland, England, and France, because they too had been poisoned by the stories that had been handed out.

I recall that there had been a meeting of the International Monetary Fund here in Washington a month or two before the election, at which leading officials of the Eisenhower Administration were spreading these stories among the heads of European central banks who were here for the meeting. Obviously, our purpose in convincing the foreign bankers of the Senator's fiscal soundness was not to get votes. These were difficult enough to find among our own bankers and you may think it was a waste of time to convince the bankers of Switzerland or Great Britain. However, our principal purpose in reaching them was to prevent a substantial decline, if not a crash, in the stock market and a flight of the dollar and our gold reserves from these shores in the



event of Senator Kennedy's election, which became more likely and probable to us the closer we came to Election Day.

I don't know to what extent our activity was responsible, but be that as it may, the stock market not only behaved in a very orderly fashion but, in fact, began a steady upward move the day after President Kennedy's election.

Jacobs: Were there any other incidents that you can remember during the campaign that you were involved in?

Klotz: Well, I can't remember any particular incidents during the campaign that I was involved in, except perhaps one which was a matter of great elation to us. I received a telephone call one day from one of the young girls on the campaign staff whose job it was, along with other young college kids, to read the daily flood of mail; and she asked me if the name Thomas Watson meant anything to me. I said, "Yes, indeed, it does"; and she said, "Well, in that case I'd better send over a letter that Senator Kennedy has just received from him in which he pledges him his support." Well, this was something we were very proud of, because it was a real breakthrough for us to have a leading businessman of Tom Watson's calibre on our side.

By and large, however, I was cooped up in a small office in Washington, and did not get too much of the thrill of being on the campaign trail, but the result, of course, was most gratifying just the same.

Jacobs: Now, when was it -- right after the election -- that you were asked to continue on and do some work in preparing the take-over of the Kennedy Administration?



Klotz:

That's right. The day after the election I went back to my office in this investment banking firm in Washington. I suppose I was the only one there who wore a cheerful expression, and in fact, I felt almost embarrassed going in there on that morning. Several days later I received a call from Sarge Shriver, who asked if I could help him out and work on the talent search.

I went back to his office, this time on a part-time basis: I spent my afternoons and evenings with him and helped with the work of putting together the Cabinet Departments and Agencies. Soon we received such a flood of applications -- so many different people were suggested by leading businessmen; lawyers, heads and Deans of Universities, in addition to all those who wrote in on their own behalf -- that a certain decentralization or specialization seemed indicated.

As a result, some of us who worked for Mr. Shriver in the talent search were given the responsibility for a particular Department or Agency. Mr. Shriver assigned the Department of Commerce to me -- that is, names of candidates submitted and who were considered of potential interest to the Department of Commerce were put in the Commerce Department folder and further analyzed by me. I classified them according to their specific qualifications and assigned them to the different Offices and Bureaus of the Department.

For instance, Patent Attorneys who had been recommended for the job of Commissioner of Patents would be placed in one folder; men with experience in international business or international law were put into a different folder for consideration for such jobs as Assistant Secretary for International Affairs and so forth.



Sometime in December, I believe it was, the President-elect called Governor Hodges down to his father's place in Palm Beach and told him that he was going to appoint him his Secretary of Commerce. I think it was that same evening that Governor Hodges came up to Washington, and Sargent Shriver and I went to the Mayflower Hotel where he was staying and had dinner in his suite. I arrived armed with my folders and files containing many hundreds of names that I had accumulated for possible consideration by the new Secretary of Commerce, and I have been with Governor Hodges ever since.

Governor Hodges, as I indicated earlier, had been Honorary Chairman of the Businessmen's Committee for Kennedy-Johnson, of which I was Associate Director. During the campaign I had had a number of opportunities to meet with him and discuss campaign problems, but I did not know him well and I had not been too close to him during the campaign. It was only subsequent to the dinner meeting to which I referred that we became closely associated, and I am happy to say that as of this day I don't believe I have ever lost his confidence.

Jacobs:

Could we go back just a moment to the process of selection of people to be in the Kennedy Administration. Do you recall any conversations of a general nature of the kinds of people you were looking for to recommend to the President-elect? As you went into this, were you present at any time, or recall references to his suggesting kinds of people he was looking for -- nothing about specific individuals particularly.

Klotz:

I was not present at any of the meetings that the President-elect had with Sargent Shriver, but I recall conversations along the line that Mr. Kennedy, as an individual of intense intellectual capacity,



wanted to have men and women around him with whom he was intellectually compatible. He also had a tremendous political sense, and obviously the appointments had to make political sense as well.

As these individuals were appointed by the President-elect to ~~serve~~ in his Cabinet, they would immediately get in touch with Sargent Shriver. I recall being in the same room with him when Mr. Dillon phoned. Dillon, as you know, is (or was) a Republican and a successful businessman before he became an official of the Eisenhower Administration. His first concern was the choice of an Under Secretary. He told Sargent Shriver that he wanted an Under Secretary who would fill the gaps in his own make-up -- he was a Republican, therefore he wanted a good Democrat; since he was not a lawyer, he wanted a lawyer as his Under Secretary; and he was looking for a man well-versed in the political mechanizations of Washington with a good knowledge of fiscal matters.

As a matter of fact, in an indirect way I had something to do with the fact that the first man who came to Sargent Shriver's mind was Joe Fowler. Not for the reason that he asked my opinion on who would make a good Under Secretary of the Treasury, but it so happened that shortly after the campaign was over Joe Fowler had given me a paper -- a very thoughtful paper -- that he had written on the economic transition from one administration to another, with the request that I hand a copy to Mr. Shriver. I recall that I had a certain amount of trouble getting Sarge to read it. He lost the first copy that I gave him, but I made quite certain that he would get a second copy, which he read on the plane on one of his trips to Chicago. It impressed him, as it had me,



and I believe that was really the reason why -- in fact he told me so -- why Joe Fowler was selected to be Under Secretary of the Treasury. So you see that sometimes fate and seemingly insignificant incidents play an important part in the selection even of top officials.

Jacobs:

Well, in December 1960, after you met with Secretary Hodges, you began helping organize the Commerce Department. What in the first month did that consist of?

Klotz:

Of course, Secretary Hodges, who was still Governor Hodges at that time, had no obligation to me whatsoever, of any kind, but he got to know me during those days, and he asked me whether I would mind representing him in the Department of Commerce as his liaison man to the outgoing Secretary of Commerce. I said that I would be glad to do that; and I moved into a small office in the Department of Commerce -- I believe it was late in December or early in January -- I guess it was late in December 1960. The outgoing Secretary, Fritz Mueller, was very courteous and kind, and put the facilities of the Department at my disposal. The same procedure was followed in other Departments and Agencies of the Government, and as a result we had an orderly transition. Subsequently, Mr. Hodges asked me to stay on with him as his Special Assistant, which I did. I will admit that had I not been asked to continue with him, or to be involved in the Kennedy Administration in some fashion, I would have been a very disappointed if not heartbroken individual.

Jacobs:

You mention that you had gone with Governor Hodges to President-elect Kennedy's house in Georgetown, and I wondered what that meeting was about. Did you set any guidelines for what Commerce was to do?



Klotz:

I believe the principal purpose of the meeting was for Governor Hodges to tell the President-elect that he would like him to appoint Edward Gudeman, of Chicago, a former Sears-Roebuck executive, as his Under Secretary. Governor Hodges told him the considerations which had led to his choice and the President-elect told him by all means that this selection would be all right with him and that he would be glad to make the appointment.

Jacobs:

Did the President-elect indicate in this conversation in any way what his attitude toward the business community was going to be?

Klotz:

Not at that meeting, no. I don't believe he did.

Jacobs:

You don't recall any substantive discussion about the role of Commerce Department, or what he hoped Commerce would do in relation to economic growth or export expansion?

Klotz:

Only to the extent that I heard it second-hand from Secretary Hodges. He told me that when he had his first meeting with the President-elect in Palm Beach he made it very clear that he was greatly disturbed about our Balance of Payments problem and wanted Secretary Hodges to make a major effort toward the expansion of our exports. This, of course, we here at the Department of Commerce, under Secretary Hodges' leadership, have been trying to do, to some extent successfully, in the last three and a half years.

Jacobs:

Do you recall now what was your own conception and what you believed the conception of the incoming Secretary of Commerce to be in December 1960 and January 1961 as to the role of the Commerce Department?

Klotz:

Well, the Department of Commerce had been traditionally a staid old agency which had been left increasingly out of the counsels of government.



The Secretary of Commerce was traditionally expected to be the voice of business in government. This was not always easy during Democratic Administrations, because the businessman as a rule is not the most faithful constituent of a Democratic Administration, so his influence, of course, is not the same as that of some of the other great power blocs. Under Republican Administrations I suppose it was different.

My conception of the job of Secretary of Commerce was that he should represent the views of the business community, but that he should balance them carefully with those which might be termed as representing the public interest. These two views, I suppose, cannot always be compatible; but I felt that a Secretary of Commerce could -- especially in a Democratic Administration, represent the business community much more successfully if he were definitely a "member of the club", that is, a member of the Administration team and not an outsider, which Secretaries of Commerce were frequently considered to be. I suppose there were inevitable clashes when they shared the views of the business community to a greater extent than might have been advisable in instances when those views did not coincide with Administration policy.

Jacobs:

Now, this was in a Democratic Administration.

Klotz:

I am talking about a Democratic Administration. Now President Kennedy, of course, made every effort to become a friend of the business community. Early in his Administration, when largely because of the demands which Secretary Hodges made upon the Business Advisory Council, that body disassociated itself from the Department, President Kennedy continued to deal with them and to have them over to the White House, for the principal purpose, I am sure, of indicating that he would continue to seek their views and that he



would continue his interest in balancing the diversity of views prevalent in the American society.

Jacobs: We might come back to the Business Advisory Council; but, first, would you state what your official role was when you first came into the Department in January 1961, when you were named Special Assistant, which later was changed to Deputy to the Secretary.

Klotz: Deputy to the Secretary, that is right.

Jacobs: What was your function in the Department?

Klotz: My function was to be the principal assistant to the Secretary of Commerce and primary contact with the White House on matters pertaining to Commerce Department affairs.

Jacobs: Whom did you deal with in the White House?

Klotz: My principal dealings were with the Special Assistant to the President, who played the role of Secretary to the Cabinet. This was first Fred Dutton. Later on, when Fred was appointed Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Affairs, the post was assigned to Ted Reardon. The Special Assistant to the President had asked that each Cabinet member appoint an individual on his staff to be the primary contact with the White House and to serve, in effect, as a so-called "Cabinet Assistant".

What that meant was that after each Cabinet meeting the Special Assistant would call the Cabinet Assistants over to the White House for a so-called de-briefing. This, I thought, was a useful device which was intended to make it unnecessary for Cabinet members to take notes during Cabinet meetings concerning assignments or suggestions made by the President.



In other words, we would go over there with note paper and pencil and take down whatever took place at the Cabinet Meeting pertaining to our respective Departments or Agencies, and it was then up to us to see that appropriate action was taken.

It was during one such de-briefing session that we were requested to see to it that speeches of Cabinet and sub-Cabinet officers included sufficient references to the President and to his personal interest in the issues being discussed. This was not an unusual request; it is always in the interest of any Administration to keep the President in the foreground and give him credit for the accomplishments but never the blame for the failures. Unfortunately, I took this reminder a little too seriously and disseminated some of the things that were said in the form of a memorandum which subsequently became rather famous, or maybe I should say infamous. The memo was addressed to Secretarial Officers, but a rather liberal distribution of copies was also made; and unhappily for me and everyone concerned, it fell into the wrong hands.

This was in the early days of the Kennedy Administration in April 1961, I believe. An exact quotation of the memorandum found its way into a publication of the Republican National Committee known as "Battle Line". When I received the first telephone call from a newspaper reporter the day that publication hit the stands my heart sank about as far as it could possibly sink, because like so many novices in the political game my skin was not particularly thick; and I was, of course, terribly sensitive to the criticism heaped upon me as a result.

In fact, the following morning the story appeared on the front page of just about every newspaper in the country, and subsequently in the editorial pages of many. Some of the editorials, particularly in the Midwestern Republican press



referred to this incident as the "Klotz-Botch", and it was also so termed by TIME Magazine, which contained an article in its May 5, 1961 issue on the incident.

Pierre Salinger called me a day later and told me that he would, of course, be asked at the daily press briefing whether there was any truth to this story about a directive to name the President and give him credit for all the things for which he may or may not have been personally responsible. He told me that, of course, he would have to disown me; and I said, "Pierre, that's perfectly all right. I understand exactly what you have to do." He handled it in a very nice way. He said that he didn't think anybody in the Administration believes that the President's name is not in the papers enough, and that he thought I had been just a little over-eager.

As I look back on those days I recall a story which appeared in the Chicago Daily Tribune, to the effect that my memorandum had caused a new word to be created for the American political dictionary: "Klotzmanship". It was defined as "the deletion from publicity stories from government offices of projects which were begun in the previous Republican Administration" and further as "the press agent's art of keeping President Kennedy's name close to the top of official government announcements". Well, like all such things, the matter was eventually forgotten as more interesting news occurred.

In fact I am happy to say that Secretary Udall, in a slight botch of his own, took the heat off me shortly thereafter; and I haven't heard too much about the subject since. My great concern, of course, was that I might have embarrassed the President. His future and that of his Administration meant more to me than anything else. He never discussed the matter with me personally, but I heard from a few of his very close personal friends who had dined with him that night, or the following night, that he had been very magnanimous about the situation and had laughed it off as a good



joke. As a matter of fact, he must have forgiven me, because a year later when one of the Assistant Secretaryships became available in the Department of Commerce through the resignation of my predecessor, he appointed me Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Administration. I have been in this position ever since.

Jacobs:

Well, during that same period - the first few months of the Kennedy Administration - there was a controversy over the Business Advisory Council. Were you particularly involved in that, or did you have much first-hand acquaintance with the circumstances?

Klotz:

I did, yes sir, I had some involvement in it and some first-hand acquaintance. The Business Advisory Council was traditionally appointed by the Secretary of Commerce, who merely rubber-stamped the recommendations of the nominating committee, which in the first year that we had anything to do with it was under the control of Ralph Cordiner, President of General Electric, who was Chairman of the BAC, and subsequently of Roger Blough, Chairman of United States Steel Company, who succeeded him in that post.

Appointments to the Business Advisory Council were all made on January 1 for the subsequent calendar year. The result was, of course, that on January 20 when the Kennedy Administration took over the reins of government, there were no vacancies on the BAC. Secretary Hodges felt, and I believe justifiably so, that he ought to have at least some voice in the appointment of members. The Council agreed only grudgingly to his nomination of three additional members.

Another bone of contention was the fact that the Secretary of Commerce had no voice in making up the agenda for a business meeting of the



organization. The B.A.C., as it was then called, met several times a year -- four times a year, I believe: twice in Washington and twice in Hot Springs, Virginia.

We attended en masse an early meeting in Washington and then again the 1961 spring meeting in Hot Springs, Virginia. The atmosphere in those early days of the new Democratic Administration was fairly chilly. Nevertheless, the Business Advisory Council was helpful in that it assigned a number of its members to Secretary Hodges for a study of problems in the Maritime industry.

They were supposed to be an advisory body to the Secretary of Commerce; they were supposed to advise him on matters of interest and concern to him; yet by denying him the right to influence the agenda of its meetings, they deprived him of a chance to state what we would like to be advised on. I continue to think that the Secretary of Commerce had every justification to want a voice in setting up the agenda for these meetings.

Jacobs:

What were the circumstances that led to the break so the Business Advisory Council ceased being an advisory council to the Secretary, to the Department of Commerce? Do you recall that?

Klotz:

Well, as I recall it, the Secretary finally stated his terms very firmly and presented them with something of an ultimatum that he would like them to consider a certain number of things. Instead of doing that, they called a meeting of their Executive Committee and passed a resolution to the effect that the Business Advisory Council would henceforth disassociate itself from the Department of Commerce.

Jacobs:

Did they go to see the President? At that time?

Klotz:

Yes, through the good offices of Tom Watson, the Executive Committee was invited to the White House; and in fact Tom Watson was one of the few who I believe had some advance notice of what was going to happen at that meeting.



Secretary Hodges was invited by the President to be present, as was I believe Under Secretary Gudeman. At the meeting, without much ado, Mr. Blough proceeded to take a news release from his briefcase. I wasn't there, but I heard it second-hand ...and read it to the President. He said that the Business Advisory Council would be pleased to be available not only to the Commerce Department but indeed to the White House and any other agency of the government for advice and consultation at any time; and if that was all right with the President, that was what they were going to do. The President said that was fine with him. That was the way the divorce of the BAC from the Commerce Department took place.

Jacobs:

I believe you would still have been Deputy to the Secretary at the time Mr. Blough later announced in April of 1962 the steel price rise, which was rather precipitous in the way he announced it -- it went to the President and the White House and said that steel prices would go up the same day. Did you have any involvement in the subsequent events of the next day or two, in which the Administration battled against the steel industry to hold the price line and rescind the price rise?

Klotz:

Again, I was involved only indirectly; but I recall that when the news came in from the wire services that the Kaiser Steel Company would not raise its prices, and that Republic Steel had caved in, followed eventually by Bethlehem Steel, it was almost like being in a political campaign headquarters as election returns from different precincts come in; or it reminded me even more of the war room in an Army command post as reports come in from the field. I remember that we were pretty happy over here when the President was vindicated in the hard decision that he had taken.

Jacobs:

You didn't have any personal involvement or knowledge of the way in which the situation was handled?



Klotz: Anything that I know I heard second-hand. I believe you are going to speak to, or have already spoken to the individuals who were personally involved, and I think you ought to get the information from them.

Jacobs: Did you have any particular role in late 1961 and early 1962 in getting the Trade Expansion Act formulated or the Trade Expansion Program?

Klotz: By that time, the activities in the Department of Commerce were so compartmentalized that this was largely in the hands of others.

Jacobs: In June of 1962 you were appointed Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Administration. What is the function of that office and how have you carried out your duties?

Klotz: As Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Administration I am the principal administrative officer of the Department - I have under me the responsibility for a number of staff offices which by their very names connote the functions which they perform. They are the Office of Budget and Finance, the Office of Management and Organization, Office of Audits, Office of Personnel, Office of Emergency Readiness, Office of Publications, Office of Investigations and Security, and the Office of Administrative Services. Finally I have the responsibility over Federal participation in the New York World's Fair of 1964-65.

Of course, when I first took over this office I had to learn a good many things and had to become familiar with a number of areas with which I was only partially acquainted. If any priorities or degrees of importance can be defined, I would say that the annual appropriations process is probably the single most important responsibility of my office. It is a process which never ends, because when we go up before our House Subcommittee on Appropriations in February, and then go up again before the corresponding Senate



Appropriations Sub-committee - around about this time of year or later - to present the Department's request for appropriations covering the following fiscal year, we are already working on a Spring Preview for the budget request we will present to the Congress a year later for the fiscal year which will start on July 1, a year from now. This is really a continually overlapping process of great importance to a government department or agency, because none of the best thought-out programs can be carried out unless the Congress appropriates funds for the purpose. The defense of the budget request, as well as the formulation of the request, is a matter which is therefore of the utmost importance and one to which we pay the closest possible attention.

Jacobs:

Are you concerned as well not only with the budgetary considerations within the Department but also the presentation to the Commerce and Appropriations Departments on the Hill?

Klotz:

Yes. I personally am responsible for the presentation of the budget request for the Office of the Secretary under an appropriation entitled "General Administration"; but I also have the over-all responsibility for the entire Department. I am present during the entire hearing, although in some cases the principal witness may be a Bureau Chief. I represent the Office of the Secretary, and the Chairman or other members of the Appropriations Subcommittees will frequently address questions to me intended to draw me out on Departmental policy and the Secretary's point of view in certain areas.

Jacobs:

I know there is a Special Assistant to the Secretary of Commerce for Congressional Relations. I take it the major concern with Congressional Relations falls under your jurisdiction?

Klotz:

No, the major responsibility for Congressional Relations falls under his jurisdiction. I am concerned only with Congressional Relations as far as Appropriations Committees are concerned.



You asked a very good question because this is the one area which, though clearly defined, is somehow in two different hands. The Deputy to the Secretary for Congressional Relations is concerned with all Congressional liaison except where it pertains to the budget. And that, of course, is largely the relation with the two Appropriations Committees, particularly the Subcommittees which have responsibility for the Department of Commerce budget. In the House, the Chairman of that Committee is Congressman John J. Rooney, of Brooklyn, and in the Senate it is Senator McClellan, of Arkansas.

Jacobs: So, while the Special Assistant might deal with Congressmen and all Members of Congress on various matters concerning Commerce, you would be dealing primarily or solely with the Committee Chairmen?

Klotz: That is right; the Committee Chairmen and members of the Appropriations Committees and their staffs. In other words, ...

Jacobs: You have a continuing relationship with them.

Klotz: I have a continuing relationship with them; and in any other matters of a legislative nature or any other Congressional relationship where a member of one of our Appropriations Subcommittees is involved, the Deputy to the Secretary for Congressional Relations will always defer to my judgment, cue me in on things concerning those relationships, etcetera.

Jacobs: Have there been during your tenure as Assistant Secretary any particular incidents or situations involving the Committees of Congress that concern themselves with Commerce that are notable -- worth recording -- any difficulties, etcetera?

Klotz: There have been many pleasant experiences -- there have also been some difficult experiences. I would suggest that if you want an exciting weekend of reading, you take with you the transcript of some of our Hearings, particularly in the House; they tell a very vivid story.



Jacobs: Mr. Rooney's Committee?

Klotz: Yes. Obviously, Mr. Rooney, like anybody else has his likes and his dislikes. He is a tough Chairman; there is no question about that. He is also one who has the most tremendous knowledge of the workings of this Department. I suppose, to use a trite expression, if you treat him fairly and squarely, he will treat you fairly and squarely. There have been some programs that the Department has undertaken which have not found great acceptance in his eyes.

Jacobs: Was one the U.S. Travel Service?

Klotz: The Travel Service was one of them. While Mr. Rooney does not believe that the Federal Government should be involved in the expenditure of taxpayers' funds to advertise abroad (he feels this should be left in the hands of the carriers; in this particular instance, the steamship companies and the airlines), and I am sure he is very sincere in that belief, I think his dislike for the Service is somewhat influenced by personal considerations: he has never been able to hit it off particularly well with the Director of the U.S. Travel Service, who has since resigned.

On the other hand, I think we sometimes tend to forget that just because Mr. Rooney can be quite vociferous in his expressions of dislike for certain programs, it does not mean he is unfriendly to all programs. Just to mention one: I don't think you will ever find a greater friend anywhere in Congress of the Merchant Marine or the Maritime Administration, which is part of this Department and represents the interests of the Merchant Marine.

Jacobs: While you have been Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Administration, have you had - or what has been your relationship with the White House, the President, until November of 1963?



Klotz:

Of course in my present job the occasions when I get together with members of the White House staff or the President are few and far between. The activities in which I engage are not particularly related to new and exciting programs. We render service more than anything else. Before I get into this any further, I would just like to answer the question you asked me before: what have I been doing since I've been Assistant Secretary of Commerce.

Earlier I explained some of my functions to you. Once I got my feet on the ground and became thoroughly familiar with this area, I undertook a number of reorganizations in my staff offices; and I'm quite proud of the fact that we now have a very smoothly running machine in this administrative area. Just to cite an example -- we never had an Office of Management and Organization before in this Department. This was one of the few Departments without one. I instituted such an office and obtained a senior budget analyst from the Bureau of the Budget to run it for us, and we have done very, very well with it.

It operates with a small staff of specialists and constitutes, in fact, a management consultant service which is available to the Secretarial Officers and the Bureau Chiefs. Mr. Rapp, the head of the office, has been able to create such a favorable image that his services are being sought by many of the Bureaus for assistance with their managerial problems.

The Cuban situation revealed that we had a very poor set-up here in the Department to deal with a national emergency. I have since assigned the function to a bright young fellow who is a hard worker and enthused with his job. He is now the head of the Office of Emergency Readiness; and I believe we are reasonably well prepared now, which I am sorry to say we were not during the Cuban crisis.



Jacobs: What form did that take? Were there adequate plans to prepare in anticipation of the possible need to mobilize suddenly?

Klotz: The Department had a set of plans for some time but, in my judgment, they were inadequate as we found out during the Cuban Crisis. You see, Commerce has very important war-time or general emergency responsibilities, particularly in the field of industrial mobilization and transportation. We also have a responsibility for the continuity of our part of the government per se and for the survival of our personnel. We have assigned to us certain areas where the Department would relocate in times of emergency and under certain given conditions; and I believe we are fairly well organized for that purpose now.

Jacobs: That was in October 1962 - the missile crisis.

Klotz: That's correct. So much for the Office of Emergency Readiness. We have also reorganized the Office of Administrative Services -- this is the office that handles the general housekeeping for the Department. We are currently engaged in a major effort of centralizing procurement activities which we hope will lead to very substantial annual savings to the government and the taxpayers. We have about 150 procurement and contracting officers in this Department who work for different Bureaus, and we are trying to bring this activity all together under one authority. This would make it possible to provide greater specialization in the procurement of widely different items and at the same time to save a great deal of money through the elimination of jobs and overlapping functions.

And now to get back to your other question, Mr. Jacobs, about my relationship with the White House in my present job. In the office of Assistant Secretary for Administration my contacts with the White House are not as frequent as they used to be, except for one area over which I have retained responsibility although it has nothing to do with the administration of the Department. It has been a very exciting and challenging one to me. I am speaking of Federal participation in the New York World's Fair, which opened on April 22 of this year.



The reason why I got involved in it at all was that shortly after President Kennedy took over the reins of government, he received a call from Mayor Wagner, of New York, and Robert Moses, President of the New York World's Fair Corporation; and they came down here to solicit his interest in participation of the United States Government in the forthcoming New York World's Fair.

There was difficulty in obtaining special Congressional authorization for such participation, but general authorization was later found to exist in the Mutual Cultural and Educational Exchange Act of 1961 -- the so-called Fulbright Act -- which was passed late in the fall of that year. Subsequently we went before the Congress with a supplemental appropriation request to allow us to participate in the Fair. That request went to the Congress early in 1962 but was not acted upon by that body until the summer of 1962.

To adequately prepare for a major undertaking of this kind, to put up a building and to plan, fabricate, and install exhibits, should take -- according to all the experts -- a minimum of three years. We then had about a year and nine months to go, and this was very little time.

President Kennedy realized the shortage of time long before we received the necessary appropriation and made it quite clear to the Secretary of Commerce that he wanted him to pursue the planning for the New York World's Fair with any resources at his command. Of course, we had no appropriation which we could use for that purpose; and you can't do anything in government or elsewhere without money, so we had to look elsewhere. We solicited and received at that time two gifts of \$5,000 each from two public-spirited citizens. The President accepted these funds, which he was authorized to do under the same Act which I cited previously; and we used that \$10,000 to engage the services of an architect, or rather to have GSA engage the services of an architect to come up with a design for the Federal Pavilion.



Jacobs: This was solely for the Federal Pavilion?

Klotz: Solely for the Federal Pavilion. The firm of architects selected for the purpose was Charles Luckman Associates. As a result, when the appropriation was finally granted by Congress, Mr. Luckman was ready to come forth with something like 28 different designs for a Federal Pavilion. Incidentally, Mr. Luckman spent much more than the \$10,000 that GSA contracted for with him, giving us the opportunity to proceed.

The reason why I make particular mention of this matter is to point out that we were in a position to proceed at all before the summer of 1962 only because of the President's personal insistence. The New York World's Fair was a matter of great importance to him and has in fact been described by personal friends with whom he discussed it on frequent occasions as a hobby of his. He recognized the importance of putting the Government's best foot forward in New York in 1964.

At that time, which was early in 1962, I was still the principal liaison man in the Department of Commerce with the White House; and because of the President's interest, the World's Fair responsibility was assigned to me. I retained it when I subsequently became Assistant Secretary of Commerce. As the months went by, and we began to lay serious plans for Federal participation, the President continued his personal interest.

I was continuously amazed at his knowledge of some of the detail that went into our preparation. We briefed him at the White House from time to time and he maintained an intense interest.

The theme of the Federal Pavilion is "Challenge to Greatness". It was developed as the result of deliberations made by a Citizens' Advisory Committee which we appointed early in 1962.



The Committee was headed by Chuck Spalding, a personal friend of the President who is an investment banker in New York. It included several very prominent citizens, primarily of New York, people in business, the arts, and academic endeavors. It was the feeling of this Committee in its recommendation, which was subsequently adopted by President Kennedy, that the Federal Government should not offer up before the world an exhibit of our material achievements, but instead should emphasize the spirit that made these achievements possible; and that it should remind the American people as well as visitors from abroad of the challenges which we are still facing in this country and which this generation of Americans, and future generations of Americans, must deal with.

We believe that we have somehow -- difficult though it was -- accomplished our assignment in the exhibits which are presently shown in the Federal Pavilion at the New York World's Fair.

I must tell you about another incident which points up the President's personal concern with this program. Back in the fall of 1962 we had adopted a design for the Federal Pavilion which to all concerned looked like a pretty fabulous one, although there was no question about the fact that the concept might be controversial. It was a radically new kind of building which those of us who had a voice in determining the final design selected because we felt that it would be exciting and stimulating. Shortly after the decision was made, but before it was ever announced, word had obviously leaked out and the design was roundly criticized on the editorial page of Architectural Forum, the bible of the architects.

The President became concerned, presumably because he was embroiled in enough controversy on other fronts and felt he should not be faced with another one in a field where it was logical to reduce potential controversy to a minimum. One night shortly after the editorial had appeared my wife and I attended a party at the British



Embassy following a benefit performance of the play "Mr. President". We danced once around the floor to see who was there, when a tall man got up out of his chair, and he turned out to be the President. He shook hands with us and said to me, "I want to talk to you about the New York World's Fair".

Well, that evening, with Arthur Schlesinger and Bill Walton, who is now Chairman of the Fine Arts Commission, we scrapped the original design for the Federal Pavilion. On the following day Charles Luckman was airbound for Washington, and we selected another design which in our earlier selection process had been our second choice of the 28 designs which had been submitted. The President approved the new design and our building is now dignified, non-controversial, and without question the most imposing pavilion at the Fair.

Jacobs:

It was described by the New York Times correspondent as a gigantic ice cream sandwich on top of a pyramid.

Klotz:

That is one description. It has also been described as a square doughnut; but to be fair, I ought to counter with the statement which TIME Magazine made in describing the New York World's Fair, when it said that "Some of U. S. architecture's proudest names are represented at the Fair, but none come off with any particular distinction, except perhaps Charles Luckman with his severely simple United States Pavilion." There have been many other highly complimentary comments, so I suppose the President was vindicated in his choice.

The President kept himself as well informed on our plans for the exhibits which were to be placed inside the pavilion as he did on the construction of the building itself, and he knew of the availability of some unused space. One Monday morning in



October 1963 he called me up (as you know, the President did not always stick to the formal channels of communications; he knew that I had responsibility for the World's Fair participation, so he called me directly instead of the Secretary of Commerce). He phoned to ask whether I had received his letter. I said, "No, Mr. President, I have not received your letter." This was on a Monday morning, and it turned out he had dictated the letter on Friday afternoon -- it was no more than a short memorandum, a few lines -- but he obviously had been thinking about it over the weekend and discussed it with some of his friends. He was anxious to talk to me about it rather than wait for a written reply.

He had been wondering about including in our pavilion an exhibit on our past Presidents, and suggested that we check with some of the museums, The Smithsonian, and the Archives to find out about the availability of what he called "strictly American pieces" that would have a direct relationship to these Presidents. As an example he cited President Wilson's typewriter, which had been given to him and which he had placed in the Fish Room of the White House. He was thinking of other memorabilia also, such as Lincoln's stovepipe hat and various items of that kind, and wanted to know what I thought of it.

I told him that I thought the idea of having a collection of artifacts and memorabilia of our past Presidents would be great provided that we could combine them with documents pertaining to the major issues and challenges which had confronted these Presidents in their day, thus tying in the show with the "Challenge to Greatness" theme of our Federal Pavilion. He liked the suggestion and we discussed it for quite a while. He asked me to keep working on the matter and keep him informed.

Of course, when you hear the President express a personal wish and he calls you himself, you



set everything else aside and go to work. We went into action within minutes. We called the Smithsonian, the Library of Congress, the National Archives, and others, including particularly Arthur Schlesinger, who was my principal White House contact on matters pertaining to the New York World's Fair.

The President's personal interest was communicated to all hands, and as a result the response from all quarters was immediate and positive. All of us became fascinated with the President's idea and thought that this could be truly an exciting show with the potential of being more stimulating than anything else already planned for the Fair.

Unfortunately, it was quite late in the game, this being October, and the Fair was to open in April of 1964. So, even on the chance that we would not get this particular exhibit ready by Opening Day, we went ahead. A great problem which confronted us immediately was how we could possibly find the right kind of documents and memorabilia on all of our past Presidents. President Kennedy, incidentally, did not want to be personally included.

It soon became apparent that some of these Presidents had not left many memorabilia worthy of note and, indeed, the administrations of some had not been particularly distinguished. Arthur Schlesinger came up with a brilliant idea which seemed to hit the nail right on the head, that is, to select only the eleven Presidents who in a poll of seventy-five historians and political scientists published early in 1961 in the New York Times Magazine were deemed to be "great" or "near great".

The trouble with that list, as far as President Kennedy was concerned, was that the last President considered great was President



Roosevelt, and the last President considered near great was President Truman; but President Kennedy wanted General Eisenhower included. This thought raised havoc with Arthur Schlesinger's historian's conscience. He came up with the counter proposal that we might omit all living Presidents. The President said to him, "Arthur, you go and discuss it with Herbert and see what he says, and let me know."

As a result, I put down my thoughts in a lengthy memorandum to the President. I found myself in agreement with his suggestion, (and I assure you it was not merely because he was the President; I felt that by including General Eisenhower we would eliminate the possibility of any criticism that we were playing politics with the issue of the Presidency, and that this would show up the President as a far more benevolent judge than the seventy-five historians and political scientists who took part in the New York Times poll. In fact I thought it was a great solution.

On Wednesday night, November 20, around seven o'clock, Arthur Schlesinger called me to say that he had a message from the President. He told me the President was siding with me as against Arthur's suggestion. I asked him if I could quote him on that, since it was not every day that Arthur Schlesinger got over-ruled in my favor. He said, "Yes, you can quote me on that"; and we had a good laugh.

Jacobs: Especially on matters of history.

Klotz: That's right. The following day, Mr. Kennedy left for Texas on his last trip. You can imagine how much I treasure the memory of being involved in one of his last decisions.

After his assassination it became quite obvious to me that we must continue with this project; that



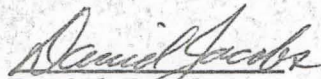
we must include not only the eleven Presidents considered great or near great but also according to his wishes, General Eisenhower; and that we now must include also himself, John Kennedy, so that this exhibit would culminate in a memorial to him and through him, in a way, symbolize the continuity of our system of government as embodied in the Presidency.

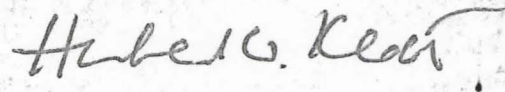
I made it my business to acquaint President Johnson of this, one of the last requests of President Kennedy; and he wrote a wonderful letter to Secretary Hodges in which he gave his full endorsement to what we have come to call "The Hall of the Presidents".

We are working on this show now, and we hope that, when it finally opens, it will be indeed a memorial to President Kennedy and to his great consuming sense of our historical heritage.

Jacobs: Thank you, Mr. Klotz.

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Daniel Jacobs

  
Herbert W. Klotz  
Assistant Secretary of Commerce  
for Administration



" A TRIBUTE TO JOHN F. KENNEDY "

By Assistant Secretary of Commerce Herbert W. Klotz,  
Presented in the German Language on the "German Family Hour",  
Radio Station WHOM November 22, 1964

(English Translation)

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In a tribute to President Kennedy his friend and assistant Theodore Sorensen wrote as follows: "On the 22nd of November 1963, three shots rang out under a Texas sky -- and the brightest light of our time was snuffed out by senseless evil. The voice which had always been calm even in the face of adversity was silenced. The heart which had always been kind even in the midst of emergency was stopped. And the laugh which had always been gay even in reply to abuse was heard no more in the land."

"Crowds waited all night in the cold and the wet to pass by his coffin in the dawn. They wept on the streets of Moscow. They prayed in the villages of Asia. They brought candles to the Wall in West Berlin. Elders who had scoffed at his youth felt suddenly that they had been orphaned. Youth who had been impatient with his patience felt suddenly older and greyer. And those of us who knew and served and loved him felt... that we were lost and alone."

I had known Jack Kennedy for many years. I neither knew him terribly well nor was I an intimate friend; yet I would have done anything for him that he would have asked me to do.



We met in 1939 when we were both 22 years old -- when the country was beginning to gird for the inevitable clash with Hitler's Germany -- he, the son of the American Ambassador to London, where the battle had already been joined; I, a native German, who was beginning to make a life for himself in his adopted country. It was significant, to me at least, that years after we both returned from fighting the war on different fronts -- he in the Pacific; I in Europe -- he should appoint me to his Administration as the only German-born to hold a sub-Cabinet post.

John Kennedy was a gentle and compassionate man, yet majestic and awe-inspiring. I never knew another person who so completely dominated a crowd, so completely electrified a room once he had entered it.

I never did get over how he managed to keep his finger on the pulse of the whole Federal Government; how he knew exactly who down the line in the Federal bureaucracy was working on specific programs; and how he would pick up the phone to call that particular person without observing the bureaucratic rules of channels of command. I never will forget the excitement which his occasional phone calls could create, when my secretary -- forgetting the existence of the intercom -- would come rushing into the room to announce that the President was calling.



It was a remarkable fact that this man, who carried the weight of the world on his shoulders, whose personal decision might influence the fate and fortunes -- yes, the very lives of millions of people all around the globe -- could take such a personal interest in projects of seemingly insignificant import.

One of these projects which had become almost a hobby of his was the participation of the U.S. Government in the New York World's Fair, for which I had been assigned responsibility. He was so anxious for our government to put its best foot forward that he kept himself informed on every detail of the Federal Exhibit and had us over to the White House for frequent briefing sessions. It goes without saying that his interest was in turn our greatest inspiration.

President Kennedy was a man who admired intellectual brilliance and excellence of performance. He was a man of cold efficiency who had respect for facts and precision and little patience with stupidity or superficiality; but, as I once learned from personal experience, he was also a man who was tolerant of honest mistakes, especially when they were made in the youthful enthusiasm which was so typical of the men and women who stood with him on the New Frontier.



Perhaps his greatest human attributes were his humor, his incomparable wit and his ability to laugh at himself. One of his most famous lines was delivered at a Gridiron Dinner in 1958, when he was still a Senator but already had an eye on the White House, and when he read the following telegram, supposedly received from his father: "Don't buy a single vote more than is necessary. I'll be damned if I am going to pay for a landslide!"

Once, in response to a rousing ovation at a dinner in Columbus, Ohio, he said: "There isn't a town in America where I get a bigger hand and a smaller vote than Columbus, Ohio."

President Kennedy was particularly proud of his new garden outside the oval office at the White House, which under his personal guidance had been transformed into a glorious vari-colored sea of shrubs and flowers. Once when he found an old friend admiring the garden he said: "This may go down as the real achievement of this Administration!"

I remember when shortly after his administration had taken office the President addressed a group of prominent business executives who, by background and inclination, were mostly in



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the Republican camp. He acknowledged the introduction of my boss, the Secretary of Commerce, Luther Hodges, by saying that it was his understanding that Secretary Hodges' ambition was to be the best Secretary of Commerce since Herbert Hoover. And, he went on to say: "As for me, I plan to be the best President since President Eisenhower."

A couple of years later, when he addressed a White House Conference on Export Expansion, which had been called by our Department, he took cognizance of criticism which had been leveled at him by some of his own Cabinet Members for the fact that he had just about abolished the Cabinet meeting as the institution it used to be. Looking around the platform and recognizing not only the Secretary of Commerce, who was chairing the meeting, but the Secretaries of State, Treasury, and Agriculture, plus a few others who usually attended Cabinet meetings, he quipped: "I am glad to see so many Members of the Cabinet here this morning. We must get together more often."

And on the early morning of that fateful day a year ago today, when he addressed the crowd which had gathered outside his hotel in Fort Worth, Texas, he quipped about the tardiness of Mrs. Kennedy, who was still arranging herself in her hotel room: "It takes longer", he said, "but of course she looks better than we do."



Yes, President Kennedy brightened our existence with "gaiety, glamour, and grace. It has been said that he "walked like a Prince and talked like a scholar".

But, more than that, in life as well as in death, he gave us new standards of excellence, of quality, and of purpose.

His countrymen will never forget him. And free men everywhere will remember him always, for he gave expression to their dreams for human rights and human dignity, and brought them hope for peace and victory over the forces of violence and mutual destruction.

To the German people, and indeed to those of us who are Americans of German descent, the name of John F. Kennedy had taken on a special symbolic meaning when on his triumphant tour of Germany he declared that "All free men, wherever they may live, are citizens of Berlin and" that "therefore, as a free man" he took "pride in the words 'ich bin ein Berliner' ".

"For all of us", as Ted Sorensen has expressed it so meaningfully, "life goes on - but brightness has fallen from the air. The world continues in the same orbit -- but it is a different world. His hand-picked successor has picked up the fallen torch and carries it proudly and ably forward -- but a Golden age is over and it will never be again."



For those of us who had the rare privilege of knowing him and working for him, those few short years will always be the best years of our lives, for they truly made our lives worthwhile.

For what you gave us, and for all that you meant to us, Mr. President, you have our thanks, wherever you may be.

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Bemerkungen von Assistant Secretary of Commerce  
Herbert W. Klotz anlässlich der einjährigen Wiederkehr von  
Präsident Kennedys Todestag auf der "German Family Hour"  
über Radiosender WHOM - 22 November 1964

"Erinnerungen an John F. Kennedy"

Im Gedenken an Präsident Kennedy schrieb sein Freund  
und Mitarbeiter Theodore Sorensen: "Am 22. November 1963  
fielen drei Schüsse -- in Texas -- und das strahlendste Licht  
unserer Zeit verlosch durch unsinnige Uebeltat. Verstummt  
war die Stimme, die selbst in Zeiten der Widrigkeit nie ihren  
Gleichmut verloren hatte. Still war das Herz, das auch in  
den kritischsten Augenblicken stets gütig geblieben war. Und  
der Klang des Lachens, welches selbst in der Abwehr von  
Schmähungen immer fröhlich war, ward nicht mehr im Lande  
gehört.

"Menschenschlangen durchwachten die kalte Regennacht, um  
im Morgengrauen einen Blick auf den Sarg zu erhaschen. Tränen  
flossen auf Moskaus Strassen. Gebete erschollen in Asiens  
Dörfern. Kerzen erglühten an der Mauer in West-Berlin. Greise,  
die seine Jugend verhöhnt hatten, fühlten sich plötzlich verwaist.  
Älter und ergrauter fühlten sich mit einem Mal junge Draufgänger,  
welchen seine stetige Geduld nicht immer gepasst hatte. Und  
diejenigen unter uns, die ihn kannten und ihm dienten und ihn



liebten -- fühlten sich nun einsam und allein."

So weit Ted Sorensen.

Ich selbst kannte Jack Kennedy seit vielen Jahren. Ich stand ihm weder besonders nahe, noch zählte ich mich zu seinen intimsten Freunden; doch hätte ich ohne Zögern alles für ihn getan, worum er mich gebeten hätte.

Wir lernten uns im Jahre 1939 kennen, als wir beide 22 Jahre alt waren -- zu einer Zeit, als die Vereinigten Staaten gerade begannen, sich für den unvermeidlichen Zusammenstoß mit Hitler-Deutschland zu wappnen -- er, der Sohn des amerikanischen Botschafters in England, das sich bereits im Kriegszustand befand; ich, ein gebürtiger Deutscher, der am Anfang seines Existenzaufbaus in seiner Wahlheimat stand. Es war bedeutsam, zumindest für mich, dass er mich viele Jahre später, nachdem wir beide vom Kriegsdienst an verschiedenen Fronten -- er an der pazifischen, ich an der europäischen -- zurückgekehrt waren, als einzigen Deutschgebürtigen in seine Regierung berief.

John Kennedy war ein milder und mitfühlender Mensch, und trotzdem majestätisch und ehrfurcht-einflössend. Mir ist nie in meinem Leben ein Zweiter begegnet, der es wie er verstand, sich so völlig zum Herrn einer Menschenmenge zu machen, so bis in die letzten Ecken einen Raum, den er soeben betreten hatte,



in elektrische Schwingungen zu versetzen.

Ich habe es nie fassen können, wie er es zuwege brachte, stets seine Hand auf dem Pusschlag der gesamten Regierung zu behalten; wie er genau wusste, welcher Sachbearbeiter -- auch in den unteren Regionen des Bundesbeamtentums -- gerade eine bestimmte Planung behandelte, und wie er sich kurzerhand durch direkten Telefonanruf mit dem betreffenden Bearbeiter in Verbindung setzte, ohne sich besonders an die Innehaltung vorgeschriebener Dienstwege zu kehren. Ich werde nie die Aufregung vergessen, die er anrichten konnte mit seinen gelegentlichen Anrufen, welche meine Sekretärin -- die mich auch durch telefonischen Nebenruf hätte erreichen können -- in mein Büro stürzen liessen, um mir zu sagen, dass der Präsident am Apparat sei.

Es war ganz aussergewöhnlich, dass ein solcher Mann, der die Welt auf seinen Schultern trug und von dessen Entscheidungen die Zukunft und das Geschick -- ja selbst das Leben von Millionen von Menschen auf dem ganzen Erdball -- abhing, eine so lebhaftete Anteilnahme an Vorhaben aufbrachte, die, oberflächlich gesehen, von nur minderer Bedeutung für ihn sein konnten.

Eines dieser Vorhaben, welches zu einem seiner richtigen Steckenpferde geworden war, war die Teilnahme der amerikanischen Regierung an der New Yorker Weltmesse, ein Vorhaben für dessen Ausführung mir die Verantwortung



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aufgetragen worden war. Es war ihm so viel daran gelegen, dass sich unsere Regierung hierbei von der besten Seite zeige, dass er sich über jede kleinste Einzelheit der Bundesausstellung ins Bild setzen und uns häufig zur Berichterstattung ins Weisse Haus kommen liess. Ich brauche wohl kaum zu betonen, dass seine persönliche Anteilnahme unsere stärkste Inspiration war.

Präsident Kennedy war ein Bewunderer geistigen Schliffes und überragender Leistungsqualität. Er war ein Mann von kühler Berechnung, der grossen Respekt für Tatsachentreue und Präzision und wenig Geduld für Dummheit und Oberflächlichkeit hatte. Andererseits -- und ich spreche da aus persönlicher Erfahrung -- war er ein Mensch, der ehrliche Fehler schnell vergab, namentlich wenn sie aus dem jugendlichen Eifer heraus begangen wurden, welcher die Männer und Frauen kennzeichnete, die Schulter an Schulter mit ihm für die Erreichung der New Frontier kämpften.

Seine vornehmlichsten menschlichen Eigenschaften waren wohl sein Humor, sein unübertrefflicher Witz, und die Fähigkeit über sich selbst zu lachen. Eine der bekanntesten Begebenheiten in diesem Zusammenhang spielte sich bei einem Festessen im Jahre 1958 ab, als er noch Senator war, aber sein Auge schon auf das Weisse Haus geworfen hatte. Da verlas er ein Telegramm,



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angeblich von seinem Vater stammend, folgenden Wortlautes:

"Kauf nur soviel Stimmen wie absolut erforderlich. Für einen Lawinenerfolg will ich nicht zahlen!"

Als ihm einmal bei einer anderen Gelegenheit in Columbus im Staate Ohio eine stürmische Beifallskundgebung dargebracht wurde, sagte er: "In keiner Stadt in Amerika bekomme ich so viel Beifall und so wenige Wahlstimmen wie in Columbus, Ohio."

Präsident Kennedy war besonders stolz auf den neuen Garten hinter seinem Arbeitszimmer im Weissen Haus, der nach seinen persönlichen Anweisungen in ein herrliches, farbenprächtiges Meer von Büschen und Blumen verwandelt worden war. Als sich einmal ein alter Freund in Bewunderung des Gartens erging, war seine Reaktion folgende: "Vielleicht wird die Geschichte diesen Garten als die wesentlichste Leistung meiner Regierung verzeichnen!"

Ich erinnere mich auch noch gut daran, wie er kurz nach seinem Amtsantritt eine Gruppe prominenter Wirtschaftsführer empfing, die herkunfts- und gesinnungsmässig zumeist im republikanischen Lager standen. Nachdem er sich für die Einführung seitens meines Chefs, Secretary of Commerce Luther Hodges, mit den Worten bedankt hatte, dass Hodges den Ehrgeiz habe, als der beste Handelsminister seit Herbert Hoover dazustehen, fuhr er fort: "Was mich selbst betrifft, so beabsichtige ich, den besten Präsidenten seit Eisenhower abzugeben."



Ein paar Jahre darauf benutzte er die Gelegenheit einer Ansprache an die Teilnehmer einer von meinem Ministerium anberaumten Tagung zur Förderung der Ausfuhr dazu, um der Kritik einiger seiner Kabinettsmitglieder zu begegnen, dass er die traditionellen Kabinetts-Sitzungen so gut wie völlig abgeschafft habe. Als er seine Blicke über das Podium schweifen liess und dabei nicht nur den Handelsminister, sondern auch den Minister für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten, den Finanzminister, den Minister für Landwirtschaft und einige andere entdeckte, die üblicherweise an Kabinetts-Sitzungen teilnahmen, sagte er scherzend: "Zu meiner Freude darf ich heute zahlreiche Mitglieder meines Kabinetts begrüßen. Wir sollten wirklich etwas häufiger zusammenkommen."

Und an dem schicksalschweren Morgen heute vor einem Jahr belustigte er in Fort Worth im Staate Texas eine vor seinem Hotel zusammengeströmte Menschenmenge mit der folgenden Bemerkung über die Säumigkeit von Mrs. Kennedy, die noch in ihrem Hotelzimmer mit der Beendigung ihrer Toilette beschäftigt war: "Sie nimmt sich zwar etwas mehr Zeit, aber dafür sieht sie auch hübscher aus als ich."

Ja, Präsident Kennedy erhellte unser Dasein mit "Frohsinn, Glanz und Anmut". Man sagte von ihm, dass er "wie ein Prinz wandelte und wie ein Gelehrter sprach".

Darüber hinaus aber, im Leben wie im Tode, setzte er uns völlig neue Masstäbe für die Vortrefflichkeit unserer Leistungen, für Qualität schlechthin, und für unsere Zielsetzung.



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Seine Landsleute werden ihn nie vergessen. Und freie Menschen überall werden seiner stets gedenken; denn er war der Ausdruck ihrer Träume von Menschenrecht und Menschenwürde; und er gab ihnen neue Hoffnung auf Frieden und auf Sieg über die Kräfte der Gewalttätigkeit und gegenseitigen Zerstörung.

Für das deutsche Volk, sowie für uns deutschstämmige Amerikaner, hat der Name John F. Kennedys eine besondere symbolische Bedeutung gewonnen, nachdem er bei seinem Triumphzug durch Deutschland verkündete, dass "Alle freien Menschen, wo immer sie auch leben mögen, Bürger von Berlin sind" und dass "daher, als ein freier Mensch", er "mit Stolz die Worte aussprechen dürfe: 'Ich bin ein Berliner'".

"Für uns alle" sagt Ted Sorensen so ausdrucksvoll, "geht das Leben weiter -- aber die Luft hat ihren Glanz nicht mehr. Die Erde dreht sich im gleichen Kreis wie zuvor -- aber die Welt ist eine andere geworden. Sein erkorener Nachfolger hat die zu Boden gefallene Fackel aufgehoben und trägt sie stolz und erfolgreich voran -- aber die Goldenen Tage sind verüber und kommen nie wieder".

Für diejenigen unter uns, die den seltenen Vorzug hatten, ihn zu kennen und für ihn zu arbeiten, werden diese wenigen, kurzen Jahre stets die besten unseres Lebens sein, denn nur sie



machten unser Leben lebenswert.

Für das, was Sie uns gegeben, und für all das, was Sie, uns bedeutet haben, Herr Präsident, nehmen Sie unsern Dank, wo immer Sie auch sein mögen.

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