

# HYANNISPORTER

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IN MEMORY OF  
BONNIE C. GARDNER,  
1932-2003

(Continued from page I...)

I then asked if she had any knowledge of them. Mrs. Lincoln then said she did remember that one morning the President came up to her desk, handed her a pair of his glasses and said to her, "Mrs. Lincoln, I fell asleep reading last night, rolled over and broke my glasses. Please send them out to be repaired."

She added that "I had the glasses sent over to the optometrist and the next day I received a call back, informing me that the glasses could not be repaired. I was also told during that same call that the President should have his eyes re-examined and would possibly need a new prescription." I told them I would inform the President and get back to them." Mrs. Lincoln said that encounter was only a few days after the Inauguration. I thanked her for her information concerning the glasses as our conversation ended soon afterward.

After a few weeks with the glasses in my possession, I also thought it might be wise to have the prescription verified by my own optician there in the Sacramento area. I hand carried the JFK glasses Doctor Cushing's office and waited while he read the prescription of the lens. He was busy that day and informed me that he would send me paperwork with the results. He made some notes and I was soon on my way home, JFK glasses in hand. It was November of 1975 and the holidays were fast approaching so it was a very busy time of the year.

New Years had ended when I realized that I had not received the JFK paperwork from Dr. Cushing. I called his office and was told that it had been overlooked but they would check the files and send it out right away.

On February 15, 1976, I received Dr. Cushing's results in writing which detailed his examination of the JFK lenses back in November. At that time I had put the JFK glasses in storage along with the authentication paperwork, and wouldn't look at them again for over 40 years. I moved to Maine in 2001 and did not unpack the glasses until the year 2017. By then, I found that the color of the frames had almost disappeared and the plastic was decomposing.

In January of 2016 I received an email from a JFK collector, Mr. Peter Klages, who resides outside Munich Germany. Over the following year Peter and I exchanged ideas and conversation about JFK Medallion Art. The following year he and a friend flew to Boston to celebrate JFK's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. Peter, his friend, and I met in Boston and were able to spend time together at the JFK Presidential Library and enjoying the birthday events at that venue.

While in Boston, we discussed many JFK items and when I informed Peter that I owned the President's reading glasses that he wore when he drafted and reviewed his famous 'Ask Not What Your Country Can Do For You...' Inaugural Address. Peter started asking several questions concerning the glasses. I told him that they were in very bad condition and needed restoration. Peter stated that he would like to see them restored and if I approved, would work in that direction once he returned to Germany.

Later that same year Peter asked me to send photographs and any information so he could inquire about having the JFK glasses restored. I photographed all the broken parts along with the unbroken lenses. More questions kept coming from Germany so I asked Peter if he wanted me to send all the pieces for a more accurate assessment? Peter agreed that would be the best way to go if he was to find someone to accurately manufacture new frames. I sent the JFK broken frame and the unbroken lenses to Peter's care in Germany. Peter spent months dealing with many craftsmen in the optical field. It took a great deal of effort on his part and for that I, and history, will always be grateful.

Last summer Peter Klages and his friend Peter Engels came to the States and attended the APIC Convention in Springfield, Ill. After the convention, finding many JFK items for their collections, both gentlemen accepted my invitation to visit to my home in the Lakes Region of Maine. While having a barbeque, Peter Klages presented me with a framed presentation case with the restored JFK glasses. I was amazed at the effort and energy Peter Klages had accomplished in completing this historic project.

I only recently found several pieces of documentation paperwork, including a 2-sided handwritten letter that Dr. Steinberg originally received with the JFK glasses.

L-R: Peter Engels, Peter Klages, William Rice

He included that same original communication to me when I purchased the glasses from him. The other documentation items are the originals from Dr. Gary Cushing in Sacramento California. The photos in this article were among those I sent to Peter in Germany when he started his quest to find someone to create the reproduction frames to hold the original JFK glass lenses.

I cannot say enough about the time, effort and love that Peter Klages put in to this historic project. Without his drive these historic glasses would still be unseen and forgotten into the backwash of history. I would also like to thank Harvey Goldberg for his effort in presenting this article in the *Hyannisporter*, so JFK Collectors and historians worldwide have the opportunity to know the background story of the original JFK reading glasses.

One can only imagine what great thoughts and plans for the future of the United States were dreamed as the 35<sup>th</sup> President studied and read through the eye glasses shown and described herein. Through his eyes, mankind's future would lie in the stars and until that day arrived, life here on earth could become more peaceful. Go outside on a still summer evening and listen while looking up to a star filled sky, listen in the silence and hear that Boston accented voice tell us the way 'to find home again.'

Photos in this article courtesy of William Rice, Jr.

