

Klansmen

Democrat's and Republican's
relationships with the
Ku Klux Klan

in

High Places?

O'CONNOR,
PENNEY/ANI &



USSS/UD

THE SECRET SERVICE
PROTECTED DIVISION
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

ANDY K.
SYLVAN, A

A few years ago, I drove deep into Florida swampland to meet a very, very old reporter, well into his 90s. His name is Stetson Kennedy and he is one of America's premier investigative journalists. He lives in a stunning wood-stilt home next to a wild pond, a testament to the dwindling beauty of the Old South. It was Stetson who had infiltrated the Ku Klux Klan, writing one devastating expose after another. There were so many death threats against him, he had to flee the country for a while.

Stetson knew all about how the Klan was revived in New York in 1915 and then spread to New Jersey and Pennsylvania in 1921. The first Klan was indeed a creation of the Democratic Party after the Civil War, before it was destroyed by the Klan Act of 1871. But the second Klan, the 1915 Klan, the one that Fred Trump belonged to, had a leg in each political camp. The second Klan switched back and forth between parties depending on local politics. The new Klan became mostly Republican between WWI and WWII. Some shade the nuances of the political division of Klan members nationwide thusly:

"By the 1920s, most of its members lived in the Midwest and West. Nearly one in five of the eligible Indiana population [white Protestant males] were members. It [the second Klan] had a national base by 1925. In the South, where the great majority of whites were Democrats, the Klansmen were Democrats. In the rest of the country, the membership comprised both Republicans and Democrats, as well as independents." Klan leaders tried to infiltrate political parties, as Cummings notes, "It was non-partisan in the sense that it pressed its nativist issues to both parties."

So the Klan pursued bi-partisan bigotry to build their membership base. "Historian



Rory McVeigh has explained the Klan's strategy in appealing to members of both parties:

"Klan leaders hope to have all major candidates competing to win the movement's endorsement. ... The Klan's leadership wanted to keep their options open and repeatedly announced that the movement was not aligned with any political party. This non-alliance strategy was also valuable as a recruiting tool. The Klan drew its members from Democratic as well as Republican voters. If the movement had aligned itself with a single political party, it would have substantially narrowed its pool of potential recruits."

We have to rethink the common perception of the Ku Klux Klan as a monolithic organization and think of bigotry as just another franchise business, with equal discrimination against all new immigrants as their only unifying slogan. Some Klan franchises like the one in New York tolerated Jews, some didn't. Some Klans made a point of hating Catholics, some didn't.

But in the 1920s, religion was still a major selling point, albeit a fading one. "Baker argues that Klansmen seriously embraced Protestantism as an essential component of their white supremacist, anti-Catholic, and paternalistic formulation of American democracy and national culture. Their cross was a religious symbol,

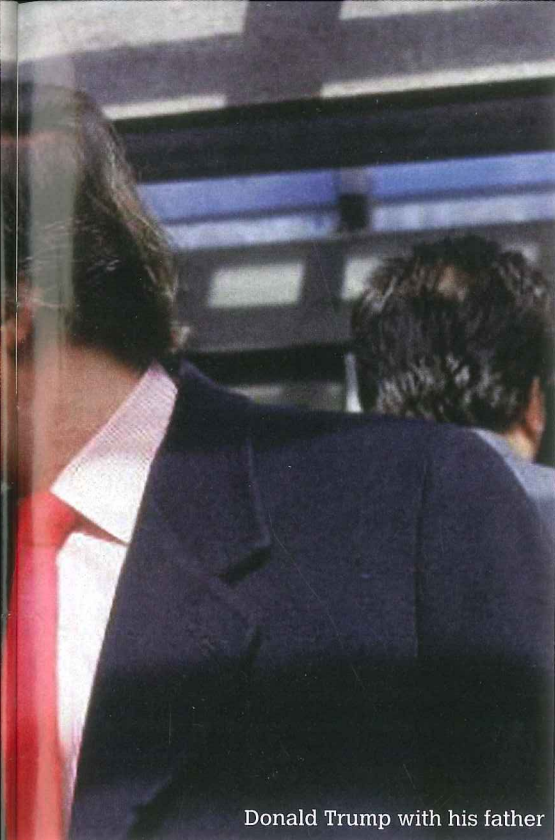
and their ritual honored Bibles and local ministers."

But the Klan learned to trade the Bible for the ballot. In some states, like Indiana, the Ku Klux Klan was so powerful they got to approve every Republican candidate running for federal or state office. In Alabama, a young prosecutor named Hugo Black was actually appointed to the US Supreme Court without FDR knowing of his leadership role in the Klan:

"Black joined the Ku Klux Klan shortly after [running for election], thinking it necessary for his political career. Running for the Senate as the "people's" candidate, Black believed he needed the votes of Klan members. Near the end of his life, Black would admit that joining the Klan was a mistake, but he went on to say "I would have joined any group if it helped get me votes."

Yeah, but I think maybe Black protested too much in pretending that his Klan membership was merely a political front. Black just worked too hard at supporting the Klan for it all to be just a political act:

"Scholars and biographers have recently examined Black's religious views. Howard Ball finds regarding the Klan that Black 'sympathized with the group's economic, nativist, and anti-Catholic beliefs.' [Roger K.] Newman says Black 'disliked the Catholic Church as an institution' and gave



Donald Trump with his father

numerous anti-Catholic speeches in his 1926 election campaign to Ku Klux Klan meetings across Alabama.”

So was it merely political opportunism to pretend to be a racist back in the 1920s just so a politician could get elected? Did Fred Trump merely ride the coattails of a nativist political movement just so he could set himself and his son up in the business world? Were the Trumps true believers in the Klan or was it just “business as usual” to get close with the Klan’s amazing electoral power base?

With six million members in the 1920s, the Ku Klux Klan was indeed a major political force in every state, and even in our nation’s capital. Stetson Kennedy told me that Washington’s secret political ties to the Ku Klux Klan were a lot worse and went a lot higher up than I imagined. Kennedy himself had tape-recorded the deathbed confession of a senior Klansman

who described how he had personally sworn President Warren Harding into the Klan. The ceremony was held inside the White House itself.

“Wyn Craig Wade states Harding’s membership [in the Klan] as fact and gives a detailed account of a secret swearing-in ceremony in the White House. Craig bases this allegation on a private communication he received in 1985 from journalist Stetson Kennedy.”

Kennedy, in turn had, along with Elizabeth Gardner, tape recorded some time in the “late 1940s” a deathbed confession of former Imperial Klokard Alton Young. Young claimed to have been a member of the “Presidential Induction Team.” Young also claimed to have repudiated racism on his deathbed, and spoke into Stetson Kennedy’s tape recorder.

“President Warren G. Harding agreed to be sworn in as a member of the Ku Klux Klan. A five-man ‘Imperial induction team,’ conducted the ceremony in the Green Room of the White House. Members of the team were so nervous that they forgot their Bible in the car, so Harding had to send for the White House Bible. In consideration of his status, Harding was permitted to rest his elbow on the desk, as he knelt on the floor during the long oath-taking. Afterward, the president appreciatively gave members of the team War Department license tags that allowed them to run red lights all across the nation.”

Deathbed Confessions

The legal system gives deathbed confessions extra weight for veracity, as the law presumes that no one would lie when they hear “the overhead drumbeat of the wings of the angel of death.” I think Klan leader Young was telling Stetson Kennedy the truth. It was one of the most important secrets of his life. If the Klan could control [Supreme Court] justices, senators and governors, it wasn’t much of a leap to elect a president who would be in debt to the Klan. After all, they did have six million members at the time.

It is entirely possible that President Coolidge, Harding’s successor, was also a member of the Klan. Why else would Klan leaders write to him to intervene in resolving a Klan policy dispute? The evidence is in the Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Calvin Coolidge Papers, File 28.

In this file there is a letter from Wizard Edward Young Clarke to President Calvin Coolidge on 27 December 1923, charging Wizard Hiram W. Evans with trying to turn the Klan into a “cheap political machine.” “It [the Klan] was to be an organization designed to up-build and develop spirituality, morality, and physically the Protestant white man of America.”

I guess he expected President Coolidge to weigh in on his “moral” side of the Klan dispute. I think a political hack like Coolidge probably opted for the “cheap political machine” as the best program for

Welcome

Congratulations on joining the 240 kehillas in 29 different cities who have already partnered with Kollelim in Eretz Yisroel.

DALLAS



Adopt-a-Kollel
AN INTERNATIONAL RELIEF RESPONSE

866.953.2735 / 0161.768.0403

INFO@ADOPTAKOLLEL.ORG

the Klan in the future. Still, some politicians like young Harry Truman, had the guts to resist the Klan's invitation for their invisible political support:

"According to... Truman's accounts, the Klan officer demanded that Truman pledge not to hire any Catholics or Jews if he was reelected. Truman refused, and demanded the return of his \$10 membership fee."

So that's at least one Southern Democrat who said no to the Klan. I am afraid that a lot of people on both sides of the aisle lacked Truman's courage. Perhaps a measure of the Klan's political power in the 1920s is that they could organize a parade in Washington, DC, to demonstrate their might to Congress. Thousands of Klansmen in white robes marched down Pennsylvania Avenue in 1928, right past the Department of Justice that felt powerless to stop them.

It should be recalled that the Klan had been declared a sort of terrorist organization shortly after the Civil War, and was even the subject of a special federal statute aimed at their destruction. The 1871 Ku Klux Klan Act condemned those who "Shall conspire together, or go in disguise upon the public highway or upon the premises of another for the purpose, either directly or indirectly, of depriving any person or any class of persons of the equal protection of the laws, or of equal privileges or immunities under the laws, or for the purpose of preventing or hindering the constituted authorities of any State from giving or securing to all persons within such State the equal protection of the laws..."

Who Did Fred trump Know?

Bottom line, the Klan Act of 1871 banned wearing Klan disguises on a public highway or any Klan interference with the police or other state authorities. Why wasn't this law used against the Klan parade that started the riots of 1927?

Well, despite some parts being declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court,

the Klan Act remained in full legal effect and was used in the modern civil rights era to prosecute the Klan's murder of Jewish civil rights activists in the 1960s. It is still good law today, on the rare occasions when the Justice Department has the courage to use it.

If the Klan's reach extended all the way up Pennsylvania Avenue to the White House, where President Coolidge was the secret Klansman-in-Chief, it would explain why the Justice Department was both blind and deaf on the day when the Klan marched right past their door in 1928 in full Klan regalia. Talk about marching in disguise on a public way.

The Klan Act would clearly have banned the 1927 Klan attack on New York police where the Klan used their hooded Klan disguises on a public way (the parade route) to hinder the police from securing to all New York citizens, Catholic or Protestant, black or white their right to peacefully assemble to hold a memorial parade in honor of the deceased veterans of WWI. Apparently Fred Trump had a few Klan supporters in the federal and state governments, because he was never prosecuted by either.

How many New York judges and politicians were secretly in league with the Klan in 1927 when an army of Klansmen and fascists seized the streets of the Bronx and Queens? The answer is: enough to ensure that the Klan was above the law and able to walk out of a New York courtroom without punishment.

Are Klansmen somehow immune, even today? I have often wondered why the Justice Department has never prosecuted David Duke under the anti-Klan laws. He certainly has given them every opportunity to arrest him for a number of charges, like the time Duke hired a bunch of armed American Nazis to overthrow the government of Grenada. I mean that has to be illegal, right? Nah, the little guys did the time, not Duke.

"On April 27, 1981, [Wolfgang] Droege

and eight other men, including Canadian James Alexander McQuirter and American Don Black who later founded the white nationalist website "Stormfront" were arrested by federal agents in New Orleans as they prepared to board a boat loaded with automatic weapons, shotguns, rifles, handguns, dynamite, ammunition and a black and white Nazi flag.

"The plan was to charter a boat to Dominica and rendezvous there with a makeshift army. The genesis of the idea came from long-time Klan member Mike Perdue, who was introduced in 1979 to Droege through David Duke. That summer, Perdue outlined his plan to overthrow the government of Grenada and set up several lucrative businesses. After their meeting, it was established that Droege would locate funds and resources. Duke initially involved Croatian-Canadian Don Andrews but after Perdue changed the target island to Dominica, Andrews withdrew."

"Klansmen Arnie Polli and Roger Dermee were paid US\$3,000 to visit Dominica and make a preliminary reconnaissance. German-Canadian neo-Nazi Martin K. Weiche was allegedly a financial backer of the plot along with James White of Houston and L. E. Matthews of Jackson, Mississippi. In February 1981, the captain and crew that Duke had arranged backed out."

Lucky for Duke that they did back out. He really dodged a bullet. But couldn't Duke still have been charged with attempted piracy or conspiracy to overthrow a government? How do these guys keep getting away with it?

FBI and the Klan

Hoover and the FBI were always on the Klan's side. I told Stetson I had seen a bit of his classified file where J. Edgar Hoover called him a "PAF." He roared with laughter. PAF stood for Premature Anti-Fascist, someone who opposed Hitler and the Nazis "too soon" (i.e. before WWII began)

and thus was thought by the FBI to a possible "red agent."

Stetson Kennedy said a word about Fred Trump that I did not understand then, but I think clears a lot of things up about the Trump family fortune. I think he said that a folksinger had tipped him off that his landlord, Fred Trump was a "Kleegle."

A Kleegle, I later learned is a Klan professional who recruits new members for the Klan. The Kleegle gets to keep half of every new Klan membership fee he collects. In the case of a ten-dollar fee paid by thousands of Klansmen in New York, young Freddy Trump could have made himself a very, very nice income in 1927.

Ten dollars was a full week's pay back in those days. If he recruited 2,000 Klansmen a year, Fred Trump's Klan commission would amount to \$10,000 annually, equivalent to a salary of more than \$100,000 today. This would explain how in a very few years an uneducated carpenter in his mid-20s could amass enough of a fortune to purchase a supermarket and start a real estate empire worth more than \$200 million on his death. It was good to be a Kleegle in the Klan.

I think Stetson Kennedy knew what he was talking about. You see, Kennedy had become a Kleegle himself while infiltrating the Klan. You can make a good living as a Kleegle. Maybe that's why Fred Trump helped lead the Klan and the fascists in the Memorial Day riots. It was fantastic free publicity for his Klan recruitment drive, a way to put more money in his pocket.

Would it not be ironic if it were Fred Trump's Klan commissions that provided the seed money for the start of the Donald's personal fortune? Was there a bit of Klan blood money comingled in the first million dollars that Daddy lent him to start the Donald's real estate empire in Manhattan?

Maybe Donald learned very early from his Dad that politicians elected by professional racists look out for each other. It's good for business. His father was never tried, let alone convicted for causing the 1927 riots. His father's 1954 congressional investigation for rent gouging veterans never resulted in a fine, let alone prison time.

And, of course, in the 1970s neither Trump paid a fine or served a day in jail for their blatant racism in screening out black tenants. When the father and son are corporate partners in crime, it is lawful to hold one responsible for the sins of the other.

Maybe the Donald learned from his father that the more you get away with, the more you can get away with. People start to think you are immune, untouchable, connected. Oh well, as Stetson Kennedy has taught us, Donald Trump would not be the first Klansman in the White House. The nation will endure.

I don't really think Donald was ever a Klan member, but I think he is consciously copying the Klan's nativist, anti-immigration stands in his campaign speeches because he learned from Fred long ago that bigotry is just good business, at least in the short run. But there can be no doubt that Donald himself continued the harshly bigoted rental policies that his father had established. They both hurt a lot of black people. That is why Woody Guthrie wrote those songs about Fred Trump's racially segregated apartments. The sad truth is that if Woody lived a little longer, he would be writing the same song about Donald.

I would be happy to know where Fred Trump's court records and FBI files have all vanished to. Where are all the records for Fred's congressional investigation? Gee, all that stuff seems to have disappeared. Maybe there is a special Klan vault in the National Archives and I just don't know the password.

Stetson did. He knew all the Klan passwords and secret Klan rituals.

Stetson Kennedy died in 2011. The Florida wilderness home is now a state park and a historic landmark. I am glad I had a chance to know him. I learned a lot. His books taught me a lot more. When I grow up, I want to be just like him. Rest in peace. ●

Attorney John Loftus, author of *America's Nazi Secret*, is a retired Army officer, intelligence analyst and federal prosecutor. He previously held a Q clearance for nuclear top secrets while working for the US government.

The perfect gift is here.



Give The Gift They'll Love.

A gift card that's accepted at over 125 Stores!

Get Jift Today!

To learn more and order:

☎ 718.THE.JIFT(843-5438)

🖥 JiftCard.com

✉ sales@JiftCard.com

To Buy Jift or Shop with Jift at local stores, look for these!

