

In the air

Kerry will do!

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As a variant of the „anyone but Bush“ bumper-stickers you see in the US, there is apparently one that has a picture of Kerry and the legend „he'll do“.

This is scarcely enthusiasm, betraying rather a deep-seated resignation. But it is also unfair to Kerry. For if anyone can clean up public life and bring America back into the international fold, John Kerry can. This dole-faced giant from Colorado may lack charisma, but he possesses some useful virtues, such as courage, integrity, perseverance and an unswerving sense of duty.

He grew up in Massachusetts, traveling around with his father on various foreign postings. After Yale, he volunteered for Vietnam, famously serving on the dangerous swift boats operating on the Mekong...and the virulent attacks on his war record, fronted by Vietnam veterans but paid for by Bush sponsors, cannot unpin the medals he was awarded for bravery.

Kerry left Vietnam enraged at the sight of so many lives sacrificed by incompetent and irresponsible leadership back home. So he fought on, giving public voice to the bitterness and disillusionment of Vietnam Vets in the vicious political arena of Nixon's America. He was targeted by Tricky Dicky's dirty tricks brigade but refused to be intimidated: his testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in April 1971 was to prove highly embarrassing for the White House.

After law studies in Boston, he embarked on a career of public service remarkable for its consistency: despite Bush Camp jibes about being a „flip flopper“, Kerry has never wavered in his determination to expose corruption and malpractice in public affairs and improve the quality of national life.

As a district attorney in Massachusetts, he took on and crushed the local Mafia, putting one of its most feared bosses behind bars.

During his lieutenant governorship of Massachusetts, he launched a nationwide campaign against the acid rain that was polluting the nation's lakes and rivers – showing a concern for ecology he probably learned from his mother, an environmentalist. He would later be a leading light in the group of „green“ Senators who thwarted Bush and Cheney's plans to drill for oil in the Arctic Wildlife Sanctuary.

His reputation as a crusader preceded him to the Senate and within a month of his election, in January 1985, he was living up to it, taking unbeknownst the first step on a trail that would lead to the exposure of the infamous Iran-Contra

affair, which starred Col. Oliver North and CIA-Chief William Casey. Kerry's instincts as a prosecutor – and specifically, his single-minded pursuit of narcotics traders, driven by his concern at the levels of heroin addiction among Vietnam Vets – led him and his team to investigate a drug-dealing ring in Florida that turned out to be running guns to the Contras in Nicaragua. The trail led them to Contra advisor „Colonel Flaco“, who had evidence that North was involved in bankrolling the Contras with Columbian drug money, and on to Manuel Noriega of Panama and sponsors in Saudi Arabia.

With the support of Republicans on the SFRC, Kerry got an official investigation launched. But North tipped off the Secret Service and the FBI and Republican staffers leaked news of Kerry's investigation to Reagan's White House and the Justice Department. On orders from the latter, the Florida prosecution was dropped. Nearly all Washington newspapers dismissed Kerry's findings as preposterous and ignored them.



A man who has always fought to restore decency to public life

Kerry persisted. In October 1986, he questioned the neoconservative assistant secretary of State for Latin American Affairs, Elliot Abrams, who lied outright about foreign funding for the Contras. But the Iran-Contra scandal

hit the headlines anyway a few weeks later and the rest, as they say, is history.

Kerry was not invited to sit on the congressional investigating committee that followed: no one could forgive the man who had been the first to blow the whistle. He was however appointed chairman of the subcommittee on terrorism, narcotics and international operations and his work on the Contra-drugs connection led him to discover a link to BCCI, the international banking giant, – also well known in Luxembourg, alas –, that was providing cover for drug running, money laundering and terrorist operations. Kerry went on the attack and by 1992, the threads of BCCI's criminal „corporate spider web“ had been laid bare.

Kerry's report on the case also pointed to other areas needing investigation, including how „BCCI and Pakistan were able to evade US and international nuclear non-proliferation regimes to acquire nuclear technologies.“

Kerry's interest in the fate of Vietnam Vets has never left him and as chairman of the Senate Select Committee, he worked to find out the truth about US prisoners of war and to reestablish relations with Vietnam.

As a Senator, he has never stopped fighting abuse and ill conduct. But many of his proposals for action – including the regulation of money laundering – could not be followed up due to the lack of a Democratic majority in the Senate...

So Kerry will more than just do!

His rival, George W. Bush, has been told the female vote will decide the election, hence his new slogan „W for Women“. And women's chief concern is now apparently security.

Therefore I ask you, ladies: with whom are we safer, a president recently described by a British diplomat as a „recruiting officer for Al Qaida“ or a man who has always fought to restore decency to public life? Who has never been cowed.

Remember, the future of the whole world is in your hands. We cannot vote in your elections, even though we are all affected by the result. And whereas Bush means global catastrophe, Kerry offers hope.

It's up to you whether November 3rd sees us hunkering down for Teresa Heinz Kerry's „four more years of hell“ or shaking off the Neocon nightmare in the dawn's early light.

-> Sources: S. Blumenthal: „Kerry's War didn't end in the Mekong“, in: **The Guardian**
The John Kerry Website - <http://www.johnkerry.com>