

A Look Back: A visit from President John F. Kennedy

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See a [brief video](#) of President Kennedy's arrival and remarks (audio of remarks starts at 1:24).

The President's visit to the Berkeley Laboratory preceded his appearance later in the day as the principal speaker for the University of California's 94th Charter Day ceremonies. While Kennedy had accepted the University's Charter Day invitation, his visit to the Laboratory wasn't confirmed until shortly before the actual day.

The presidential party, which included Atomic Energy Commission Chairman Glenn Seaborg, arrived at the Alameda Naval Air Station, where Gov. Edmund G. Brown met with and escorted the President to campus. Defense Secretary Robert McNamara and former Livermore Director and then Director of Defense Research and Engineering Harold Brown also accompanied the President. The two men had spent the previous day at Livermore being briefed on defense research projects (see photo at right).



From left: John Foster, Defense Secretary Robert McNamara and

At the Berkeley site, Kennedy was greeted by more than 1,000 Lab staffers, who had lined his route to cheer his arrival. There, the President met with a group of Livermore and Los Alamos scientists, including Livermore Director John Foster and Livermore scientists Edward Teller, Roger Batzel, Michael May, Carl Haussmann and others. Also present were Los Alamos Director Norris Bradbury and Lawrence Radiation Laboratory Director Edwin McMillan.

While the nature of the discussions was classified, White House Press Secretary Pierre Salinger stated that "one of the objects of the visit is to enable the President to get a briefing on the scientists'



From left: John Foster, President Kennedy and Edward Teller.

[Harold Brown.](#)

work; the second is to give him the opportunity to express his support of the work that is being done."

Shortly after Kennedy's visit, he wrote LRL Director Edwin McMillan to express his thanks, stating: "I was impressed by what I observed and by what you, as well as the directors of the Livermore Laboratory and Los Alamos Laboratory, told me of the work that is being done at these important installations. I wish to thank you and your staff for the courtesies shown me, and I would appreciate your extending my compliments to the laboratory scientists for the excellent job they are doing."

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