

SOME CONTRIBUTIONS OF JAMES E. WEBB TO
THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF MANAGEMENT



A PRESENTATION BY ELMER B. STAATS
COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

BEFORE THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ACADEMY OF MANAGEMENT
IN ITS SERIES, "GIANTS IN MANAGEMENT"

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA
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In preparing for my presentation today, I should like first to offer congratulations to the Academy of Management for conceiving the idea of these presentations. Your Chairman, Mr. James Worthy, in his letter to me emphasized that the aim of the series will be "to focus on the work of a selected group of * * * individuals, analyzing their accomplishments and evaluating their contributions to the practice of management." The more I considered the matter, the more I became impressed with the fact that this approach, in and of itself, met one of the tests laid down for those who appear here today, namely to answer the question posed in Mr. Worthy's letter, "In what ways are theoreticians and practitioners of management better able to improve their theory and practice because of the ways in which he (the practitioner) accomplished the great tasks to which he set his hand?"

By sharing the experiences of five outstanding individuals, the Academy is making a unique contribution toward this objective.

Also, we can all agree with Mr. Worthy that management has "come of age" in this century due to the theoretical work of students of management and the creative genius of men of practical affairs faced with the problems of directing and controlling large and complex enterprises. I suggest that each individual so honored today met this test because:

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--Each was faced with new and different challenges.
--Each found a way to surmount major difficulties.
--Each displayed a capability for innovation and creativity.
--And, while each gained principal recognition for his work as a practical man of affairs, each never lost sight of both the importance of theory to practice and of the role which academicians can play in the management problems of the "real world."

I have known James E. Webb for nearly 35 years and have had the opportunity to work with him and to observe at close hand his thinking, his personality, and his ability to translate management concepts into management reality. As a person of great modesty, a person whose accomplishments have been inadequately recognized, he would, I am sure, want me to emphasize what we can learn from his experience and how we can communicate to students and practitioners alike the excellent statement of objectives which Mr. Worthy has enunciated. He certainly would want this presentation to be neither a testimonial to himself as an individual nor a recitation of biographical information.

Throughout his career, both in public service and private enterprise, Mr. Webb has been an energetic, imaginative, and effective administrator. While he has been primarily a practitioner, he has kept himself informed on the theory and literature of management and has applied this knowledge judiciously and effectively to his work. While he is being recognized primarily because of his outstanding accomplishments as the Administrator

of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the successful Apollo program, his role in NASA was only one phase of an extraordinarily productive career which has encompassed both private industry and Government. Of noteworthy mention are: his directorship of the Bureau of the Budget in the Executive Office of the President and his contribution as Under Secretary of State in the Federal Government, and his contributions to private industry in the Sperry Gyroscope Company and the Republic Supply Company. One must include also his diversified participation in public and private activities as:

- A trustee of the National Geographic Society.
- A regent of the Smithsonian Institution.
- One of the founders of the National Academy of Public Administration.
- An active participant in the American Society for Public Administration.
- And a director on several Boards of Directors of private corporations.

In all of these relationships, he has emphasized the importance of good management, good organization, and improved program implementation as being central to successful mission accomplishment. In short, Mr. Webb is a unique public servant who cares deeply about the workings of Government and who shares in the view that public programs will succeed only as long as we are able to obtain and inspire leadership, from both the public and private sectors, to carry out national goals, objectives, and programs to meet the Nation's needs. Because he cares deeply, he has done this at great personal sacrifice, recognizing that leaders in both private

industry and Government must somehow learn how to find ways to work together if democratic institutions are to survive.

But, I return to the admonition given to me by Mr. Worthy to draw from this experience lessons that can be learned, experience that can be shared, and issues raised for debate and discussion which may benefit others-- academicians and practitioners, alike. So, I now turn to an effort to describe the problems--organizational and managerial--which Mr. Webb dealt with and which can shed light for the future.

I fully recognize at the outset that I can only briefly and inadequately deal with the question of how Mr. Webb, as Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, was able to successfully apply management principles to large-scale undertakings. Those who seek a fuller treatment of the subject would do well to read the book, Managing Large Systems, Organizations For the Future.¹ The thesis contained in this book can be summarized in these three sentences:

"Advanced technology requires the collaboration of diverse profession and organizations, often with ambiguous or highly interdependent jurisdictions. In such situations, many of our highly touted rational management techniques break down; and new, nonengineering approaches are necessary for the solution of these 'systems' problems. It is these new approaches that will be relevant for a wide variety of management challenges in the 1970s."

¹/Leonard R. Sayles and Margaret K. Chandler, Graduate School of Business, Columbia University, Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 49 East 33rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10016.

In thinking about how I could best draw from this experience to satisfy the Academy objective, I decided to ask several individuals who had worked closely with Mr. Webb to address this question. I suggest that their own words can assess better than mine the strengths of Jim Webb, as both a manager and a student of management.

As Director of the Bureau of the Budget

Jim Webb served as Director of the Bureau of the Budget (now Office of Management and Budget) from 1946 to 1949. It was in that capacity that I first came to know him. Those who worked with him learned much from that experience. He inspired and insisted upon good staff work on the part of the Bureau of the Budget. He sensed the need for a close inter-relationship with the White House staff, and he did much to crumble some previously established "walls" which had been built up around the Bureau in its working relationship with the White House. "We are all working for the President," he would say. "It is our job to see that he is served in the best possible manner." We were made to realize that work performed at the lowest levels within the Bureau could play a major part in presidential decisionmaking; and, it was our job to try to understand the forces with which the President had to deal in making his decisions.

We were not asked to make political judgments, but we were expected to be aware of political considerations which the President would need to consider and to deal with matters which would be relevant to such judgments in our memoranda and reports to the President. We were made aware of the basic point that recommendations were useful only as they related to policy

goals and objectives, and that our job, in part, was to outline the pros and cons of alternative programs from which the President could make a wiser decision.

It was during this period that the Bureau attained more intimate contact with the President. Staff members at the lowest levels were given an opportunity to meet with the President on matters with which they were concerned. This provided not only inspiration but guidance for future staff work. It was during this same time, a time when the Federal Government was swollen with wartime expanded agencies, a time when everyone was concerned about overlapping duplication and inadequate management throughout the Federal establishment, that the recommendations of the first Hoover Commission were realized with the creation of the presidential reorganization plans. Under Mr. Webb's directorship of the Bureau of the Budget, these goals became realities.

Frank Pace, currently President of the International Executive Service Corps, was Mr. Webb's Deputy for about two years and succeeded him as Budget Director; later, he became Secretary of the Army; still later, he was appointed head of the General Dynamics Corporation. He writes the following of Webb:

"In my judgment he had the finest managerial sense of any man that I have known. The Bureau of the Budget under Jim Webb was so effectively organized that the President (Truman) used it in lieu of personal staff to a high degree. It was under Jim Webb that the institution of the Presidency of the United States was fully developed. Mr. Truman had a deep and abiding sense that the Presidency was not related to a single individual,

but should develop an institutional approach to meet the complicated needs of a rapidly growing and increasingly complex society. Working with Jim, Mr. Truman developed an organizational pattern within the White House that institutionalized the Presidency. It still constitutes the basic pattern for White House organization.

"Management is a sense of people and Jim had this in the highest degree. He not only mastered the technical requirements of management but understood even more fully the pragmatics of making an organization work. He brought to government an understanding of the best features of private management and this was blended into the quite difficult requirements of public management in a way that developed the best features of both."

As Under Secretary of State

Jim Webb was persuaded to leave the Bureau of the Budget in 1949 by the President and the Secretary of State because of the recognized need to strengthen the internal management of the State Department and to improve the liaison between the White House and the Department of State. Unlike the prewar Department of State, the end of the war saw a greatly expanded corps of agencies and personnel concerned with foreign policy, with the concurrent need for strengthening the Department's leadership role in its relationships with such agencies as the Departments of Defense,

Treasury, Commerce, and Agriculture; the Economic Cooperation Administration; the Central Intelligence Agency; and others. Carlisle Humelsine, who served with Mr. Webb as Under Secretary of State for Administration and currently is Chairman of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, writes:

"Perhaps most important of all his many attributes was his wide acquaintanceship and knowledge regarding relations with Congress. Thus, he was able to take on a larger share of this important aspect of Administration policy in promoting essential programs during a difficult time in Administration-Congressional relations.

"Webb was the first highly-trained management leader to hold the position of Under Secretary of State, and, as a result, he was able to bring unusual unity and effectiveness to the internal management of the Department of State.

" . . . he was tireless, dynamic, loyal and personable in carrying out all of these White House, Congressional Interdepartmental, and departmental responsibilities. His judgment and leadership qualities, normally unrecognized, were most apparent when he served from time to time as Acting Secretary of State."

As Administrator of the National
Aeronautics and Space Administration

When Mr. Webb was appointed Administrator of NASA by President Kennedy in 1961, the Nation's space program was faced with incredible problems and

uncertainties. As Deputy Director of the Budget during the post-Sputnik period during the administrations of Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy, I was well aware of these problems and uncertainties. In commenting on a lecture by Mr. Webb to a General Accounting Office audience in 1971, I stated that

"the management challenge of almost inconceivable complexity that Mr. Webb faced as Administrator of NASA in the 1960s-- to make a manned landing on the moon--required the harnessing of the highest talents in our Nation in the fields of science, engineering, production, business management, public administration, and congressional relations. Drawing on this and other experiences, he (Mr. Webb) observes that executive leadership in governmental large-scale efforts needs much more research to identify and maintain the qualities needed for success. This research should be carried out by scholars from numerous disciplines who can observe and describe what successful executives do to produce success and what causes them to fail."

As an Academy of Management, certainly this group understands the significance of this admonition.

One of Mr. Webb's key associates in NASA was Robert Seamans. Mr. Seamans, currently Henry R. Luce Professor in the Alfred P. Sloan School of Management at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, served initially as Associate Administrator and later as Deputy Administrator of NASA, and still later he became Secretary of the Air Force. In his letter

to me, he emphasized two distinguishing characteristics of Jim Webb that might not be easily discernible except by one who had worked closely with him.

"First, he provided an environment that permitted scientists, engineers and managers to carry out their assignments. The goals that he developed for NASA had strong political support and at the same time provided some margin in their attainment. Second, even though he was working under great pressure, he allowed time to review important details and to be considerate of those with whom he was working."

The full text of Robert Seamans' letter is attached.

Breene Kerr, who also was a close associate at NASA, in his attached letter emphasizes,

"It seems to me that we too often focus on the inside aspects of the job of management, failing to give proper attention to the requirement for a good manager to maintain those relationships between his organization and the environment in which it must operate which permits it to move ahead and get the job done. Jim Webb certainly demonstrated a remarkable grasp of this requirement and ability to execute it."

Still another associate, Mr. Julian Scheer, currently Senior Vice President-Corporate Affairs of the LTV Corporation, summarized in a personal letter that,

"In my years since NASA I have found that my career and those of my close NASA associates are irreparably tied to Webb, that

what we are as managers derives from Webb. In a sense, we all emulate him. My respect has grown and grown--it grows today with every comparison of other managers."

Julian Scheer, in a longer statement (a copy of which is attached) outlines what he regards to be the unique guiding principles in the management of NASA under Jim Webb's leadership.

1. Every decision, every problem, and every congressional appearance should be regarded as an opportunity to further the organization's objectives.

2. The Administrator protects the organization and the staff from external concerns and has the responsibility for enabling the staff to do their jobs free from external pressures.

3. The ability to relate external influences, both inside and outside the Government, and determine how they have an impact upon the agency's mission.

4. Instilling a sense of mission among his associates to get others involved in a way which would enhance the agency's contribution and mission.

5. A conscious effort to innovate and to try new approaches and ideas.

6. And, the qualities of inspiration and personal enthusiasm, both of which became contagious within the organization.

This most articulate statement of Mr. Scheer meets, to an exceptional degree, the specifications which were set forth in Jim Worthy's letter to

me because, from it, I think we can learn from a firsthand observer some special characteristics of leadership which provide the basis for the Giants in Management program.

Mr. Webb has emphasized on many occasions interdisciplinary staffing as an important management tool. George L. Simpson, Chancellor of the University System of Georgia, is a sociologist by formal education and taught sociology at the University of North Carolina prior to becoming Assistant Administrator for Technology Utilization and Policy Planning at NASA. He later became Assistant Deputy Administrator. He, therefore, is quite able to speak from the perspective of an educator. He writes,

"Better than anyone I know, Jim Webb has the capacity to see the whole picture in the stress of great public affairs. I believe this to be at the root of his genius as an administrator and public servant.

"I stress this point because it can perhaps be obscured by other qualities. His vigor; his terribly hard work; his posture of a man willing to take a matter in hand and deal with it (he has often said that, 'The most important man in the room is the one who knows what to do next. '); his practical and direct solution to problems-----all of these qualities, however admirable, would have been severely limited in their effect had they not been informed by a working view of the whole. And, seeing the whole job, Jim Webb has been willing to accept all parts as his responsibility, not just those that appealed to him.

"In the larger sense of the professional management of a large enterprise, this view of the whole, time and again, showed him what was a management problem, and what was a policy decision."

And finally, there is a statement by Willis H. Shapley who was made Associate Deputy Administrator of NASA where he served for 10 years and who was brought to NASA by Mr. Webb specifically to concern himself with the processes determining how NASA performed its work. When Mr. Webb spoke to me about employing Mr. Shapley for this position, he emphasized that he wanted a fresh point of view and a fresh and critical perspective regarding how NASA was doing its management job. In effect, he wanted someone from the outside to audit the system.

Mr. Shapley, in his statement, which is also attached, makes the important point that "process" in Mr. Webb's view

"was not merely a matter of procedure nor even organization; it involved substance and depended on context as well. The job was to see that each problem was handled in a way that brought all the relevant substantive considerations and viewpoints into play so as to lead to the proper decision and at the same time strengthen the ability of the organization to deal with the next problem."

Mr. Shapley's excellent statement, based on a different perspective, still focuses on the same interests and objectives as those of the Academy of Management.

As a Contributor to the
Public Service in Retirement

Following Mr. Webb's resignation as Administrator of NASA, his interest in organization and management continues. In addition to serving as Director

of several private firms, he is a director or trustee of several nonprofit, public service organizations, including the Committee for Economic Development and the Smithsonian Institution.

The Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court has had a special interest in how organization and management affect the administration of justice. The Chief Justice serves as the President of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution. Therefore, I asked him to comment. In the attached statement, the Chief Justice, Mr. Warren E. Burger, emphasized the important contribution Mr. Webb made in establishing the Institute for Court Management which provides a mechanism for improved training of those concerned with the administration of the court system.

Like the court system which has grown in size and complexity over the years, the Smithsonian Institution is now one of the largest organizations of its kind in the world. The Chief Justice, therefore, points out that

"to assure that the Smithsonian Board carry out its responsibilities effectively, it was critical to appoint the most sagacious analyst of major programs and institutional operations I could find to serve as Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Board of Regents.

James Webb was the obvious choice."

The Chief Justice summarizes seven qualities which have enabled Mr. Webb, as a Regent of the Institution, to make a major contribution to its effective administration:

"1. A profound, yet clear, recognition that organization, leadership and administration are critical to the success of an institution, although this is rarely recognized in the Judiciary and in many other professions in the sciences and arts.

"2. The ability to divorce personal interests from problems at hand and to approach problems objectively, blending humane considerations with solid tough-minded conclusions.

"3. An ability rapidly to digest new facts and to analyze them.

"4. Avoidance of ritualistic formulas while drawing on both theory and rich experience, brilliantly and creatively relating them to the special characteristics of the problems under discussion.

"5. A capacity to illuminate many aspects of a problem without digression.

"6. A remarkable ability to induce outstanding performance and the overcoming of discouragement in other people, both by stimulating them intellectually, as well as by showing high expectations and confidence in them.

"7. A pervasive future orientation, offsetting sometimes excessive preoccupation of others with the past, and facilitating his commenting about probable consequences of virtually any proposed course of action.

"In closing, I have had a life-long interest in what goes into making effective administration. I count Jim Webb as one of the people from whom I have learned the most about effective management."

Much of what Mr. Webb has to say about the subject of large-scale management is included in the McKinsey Foundation Lecture Series sponsored by the Graduate School of Business at Columbia University in 1969, entitled "Space Age Management: The Large-scale Approach." The Dean of the Graduate School of Business, Courtney C. Brown, in the Foreword to this book, noted that James Webb

"organized a tremendously successful effort that in less than a decade brought together many of the nation's best scientists, engineers, and managers and achieved results in space that were felt to be of compelling urgency." As a result of this effort, "New vistas of opportunity for both business and government working in collaboration have emerged as a result of the total NASA project."

In 1971, I invited Mr. Webb to present a lecture before a General Accounting Office audience in a series entitled, "Improving Management For More Effective Government," as a part of the 50th Anniversary Lectures commemorating the enactment of the Budget and Accounting Act of 1921. Much of what Mr. Webb had to say in "Space Age Management" is summarized in this lecture entitled, "Leadership Evaluation in Large-Scale Efforts." In concluding my presentation today, I should like to note several points which are emphasized in this lecture which bear directly on the Academy's

desire to learn from the experience of the five individuals being honored on this occasion. Here are some of the major principles which Mr. Webb enunciated.

The Importance of Feedback

"My theme is that once the plans are made we need the kind of job done in administration that will enable both citizens and Congress to get a feedback against the assumptions which underlie program content and to see for a given program or project what was done, by whom, and with what result. This requires strong leadership. It also provides a way through which leadership can be constantly improved and the public dialogue and debate can bring about support for that which accomplishes the desired results and force changes in what does not. I believe we need to do more 'looking at the record' of what results were achieved and by what means rather than to spend time listening to more promises thought up by speechwriters seeking a headline for their principals. We need to know more about why so many important undertakings seem unable to proceed except in perilous proximity to the rocks of disaster. We need to know a great deal more about what makes for successful leadership in large-scale endeavors."

The Importance of Adequate Planning

Mr. Webb and I served recently as members of the Commission on Government Procurement, which was established by the Congress to examine

every aspect of the Government's policy and management of procurement for the Government's needs, including such major systems as those developed by the Department of Defense and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. In the Commission discussions, Mr. Webb took a leading part in emphasizing the importance of careful planning before decisions and commitments are made regarding a given system.

In recalling some of the difficulties with the Apollo program, Mr. Webb observed in the 1971 lecture:

"Let me immediately make the point that is in my mind. It is that Apollo succeeded and NASA survived because it followed a clear management philosophy and steadily tested its assumptions as well as its hardware. The basic assumption was that rocket-powered transportation for men cannot avoid high risks and public visibility; that rockets are much more dangerous and difficult to use than other machines; that bold objectives require conservative engineering; that in rocketry if anything can go wrong, it will; that even the best of plans cannot incorporate all contingencies; and that when an unplanned-for event occurs the immediate need is to find out what happened, to apply the best available knowledge and technology to fix it, and to thoroughly test the fix.

"We learned what we could from military developments and experience of the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA). We knew that before NASA was formed NACA had developed a pattern for encouraging and guiding research and development which involved

industry and universities as well as Government, in guiding the total national research and development effort in aeronautics and utilizing the results. Under NACA, the policy was to support promising efforts to expand scientific knowledge in areas of aeronautics where practical applications could be foreseen. Engineers as well as scientists were a part of this process and new designs were encouraged. At a point of accumulated progress, a summary of the state-of-the-art emerged and formed a basis for new approaches. Both component and systems development were supported. In the 1950s, this approach that had proven so effective in aeronautics was expanded to include rocketry. Thus for the Apollo effort NASA was able to draw on a well-worked-out basic pattern of intelligent support for research and development in both aeronautics and rocketry. Without this, and the closely related developments of our military services, NASA could not have done its job so rapidly."

Providing Incentives for Creative
and Innovative Performance

Referring to his NASA experience, Mr. Webb pointed out that when problems arise it does little good to adopt the philosophy of "find the culprit." Rather, he says,

"We based our incentives for creative and innovative performance on the assumption that scientific methods could be used to help solve the developmental problems of high-performance vehicles and .

that we must be prepared to rapidly identify and solve many complex problems that could not be foreseen. Our assumption was that to build this capability to work with the known and to meet the unknown would prove the most efficient and least costly way to proceed."

Relating Project Management to
Future Options and Alternatives

Mr. Webb goes on to raise the question of what can be learned from the broader NASA experience which may provide options for even more advanced programs.

"It is clear that NASA had to fit Apollo into an even larger program that included a search for life on Mars and Venus, an extensive program of studies of the solar system and the universe beyond, and a search for better means to utilize the earth's atmosphere. NASA had to break new ground in the use of materials, in achieving reliability in both large and small rockets, and in advanced aeronautics, through planes that could hover over one spot, and others that could fly more than 4,000 miles per hour. We had to learn to use the private sector for over 90 percent of our work but to build up an in-house capability strong enough to effectively manage all resources employed.

"I can assure you that if you dig deep enough you will find that the decisionmakers, at every major turning point, received conflicting advice. I am sure you will also find that one element

of many crucial decisions is a deep inner searching and assessment by the senior responsible officials as to whether they have the strength and ability to supply the leadership required to get the job done. I suggest also that you will more and more have to look into whether a prime concern of the leadership group is to incorporate the best of administrative theory and doctrine in their program plans and to couple these with the scientific, engineering, and other essential elements."

Importance of Effective Communication and
Integration of Line and Staff Efforts

Based on his experience with the executive secretariat established in the State Department by General George Marshall, one of Mr. Webb's early actions after becoming Administrator of NASA was to establish an executive secretariat skilled in communications to monitor and control information among both line and staff organizations. This group reported directly to the Administrator which enabled him to follow (through the flow of correspondence, documents, and contacts) the key participants and dynamics of the total NASA effort, including both the informal and formal ways of working. In his words,

"This group was charged with developing both knowledge and judgment on the organizational and decisionmaking approaches of the men operating the system and the procedures which they used. They were specialists in the flow of decision-related information. They were charged with assisting, guiding, and teaching those who would take advantage of their help, from senior officials down to key personnel at all levels. Their

effort was to encourage everyone to work within the 'system' but also to know when ad hoc or informal substitutes were being used. It was their responsibility to know where authority resided at a given time on a given matter and what information was flowing in the system, up and down, correct and incorrect."

The Need for Flexibility and Organizational Dynamics

Drawing on the analogy of Wilbur and Orville Wright's experience in developing a coordinated system of controls for their successful flying machine, Mr. Webb refers to an organization that recognizes that it is working in a turbulent environment and, therefore, needs a careful balance between an overly rigid system of administration and organizational pattern and one which could respond to the needs for change.

"In explaining to NASA personnel the objectives of our dynamic and evolving organizational and administrative patterns, it was not hard to convince most of our executives that we were required to fly our administrative machine in a turbulent environment, and that a certain level of organizational instability was essential if NASA was not to lose control. The next step was to show them that we could develop information systems, patterns of authority, and procedural controls that were effective, responsive, and flexible, and which fitted in with what an executive could and should do naturally."

The Need for More Research
on Leadership

I would like to conclude by reading a part of the last paragraph of Mr. Webb's 1971 lecture, which I believe is particularly relevant to this audience. He says,

"As we think about what the experiences of the past 25 years can mean for future managers, let me close by stating my conviction that we need much more research on what executive leadership in Government needs to do to nourish and effectively attend to the care and feeding of the organizational entities without which we cannot develop and maintain all the qualities needed for success in large-scale efforts. Many competencies are vital. We know that some leaders can bring all of them together for great accomplishments, but we know little of how they do it. How a leader placed in charge of a large, complex effort can relate his operational to his nonoperational problems and to the forces at work in the environment needs a great deal of study. I believe that in Government today we have no greater need than to involve scholars from many disciplines in this research, scholars who can observe and accurately describe what successful senior governmental executives do to produce success and what causes them to fail. We particularly need close cooperation between these researchers and our best governmental executives so that the research results can be translated into new and better teaching in our graduate schools. And then we

need to select and support the kind of executive--the kind of leadership groups that can bring this new knowledge into use in real-life situations."

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COMPLETE TEXT OF STATEMENT BY

ROBERT C. SEAMANS, JR.

WITH RESPECT TO JAMES E. WEBB'S
CONTRIBUTION TO MANAGEMENT

I am in receipt of your letter of February 27 regarding your presentation of a paper at the Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management which will recognize the achievements of Jim Webb as an Administrator.

I worked with Jim for seven years on a day-to-day basis at NASA and since then have kept in reasonably close touch through our association with the National Geographic Society. Jim has so many excellent and unusual qualities it is difficult to summarize them in a short letter. Hence, I'm mentioning two characteristics that might not be obvious to those who have not worked with him at close hand. Both of these characteristics relate to President Kennedy's decision to proceed with the Apollo Program for Manned Lunar Landing.

On the Saturday following Allan Shepard's suborbital flight, Jim and I met with Robert McNamara, Roz Gilpatrick and John Rubel to put together our joint recommendations for the U.S. Space Program. During the previous month Cosmonaut Gagarin had orbited the earth and as a result there was growing concern about U. S. scientific and technical competence vis-a-vis the USSR. We decided at the meeting that NASA and DOD would recommend a variety of programs including manned lunar exploration. This recommendation, along with its rationale, had to be in the Vice President's hands by Monday morning, and as a result John Rubel and I were asked to prepare the documentation starting with an existing DOD draft.

Following the meeting at the Pentagon, Jim worked with the White House staff to prepare the plans for appropriate ceremonies at the White House and the State Department for Allan Shepard, all to take place on Monday. By Sunday afternoon he was meeting members of the Shepard family and making sure that all their accommodations were in order.

I kept Jim informed of our progress on the report and he decided to come to the Pentagon on Sunday evening to review our efforts. He spent several hours with us editing and making important substantive changes. As we were leaving, he asked one of the secretaries who had been working all week end how she was planning to get home. Finding that she did not have a car, he offered to drive her to her home in Arlington. At the time we arrived at her home, there was a torrential downpour. He insisted that she wait in the car until the rain let up, all of which meant that Jim did not get home until after three o'clock and, as I mentioned, he had a heavy schedule ahead of him later in the day.

The NASA/DOD recommendations for the Apollo Program were accepted by the Vice President and the President and several days later the prepared text of the President's message to Congress was sent to Jim for his review. Our studies indicated that the manned lunar landing might take place in 1967. Jim argued successfully that an Administrator's discount should be put on the schedule, if it were to become an announced national goal. The President concurred, and the goal became manned lunar landing and safe return within the decade.

I mention this history to emphasize two distinguishing features of Jim Webb that might not be generally recognized. First, he provided an environment that permitted scientists, engineers and managers to carry out their assignments. The goals that he developed for NASA had strong political support and at the same time provided some margin in their attainment. Second, even though he was working under great pressure, he allowed time to review important details and to be considerate of those with whom he was working.

COMPLETE TEXT OF STATEMENT BY

BREENE M. KERR

WITH RESPECT TO JAMES E. WEBB'S
CONTRIBUTION TO MANAGEMENT

Responding to your letter of February 27 is indeed a pleasure, although, quite obviously an exceedingly difficult thing to do.

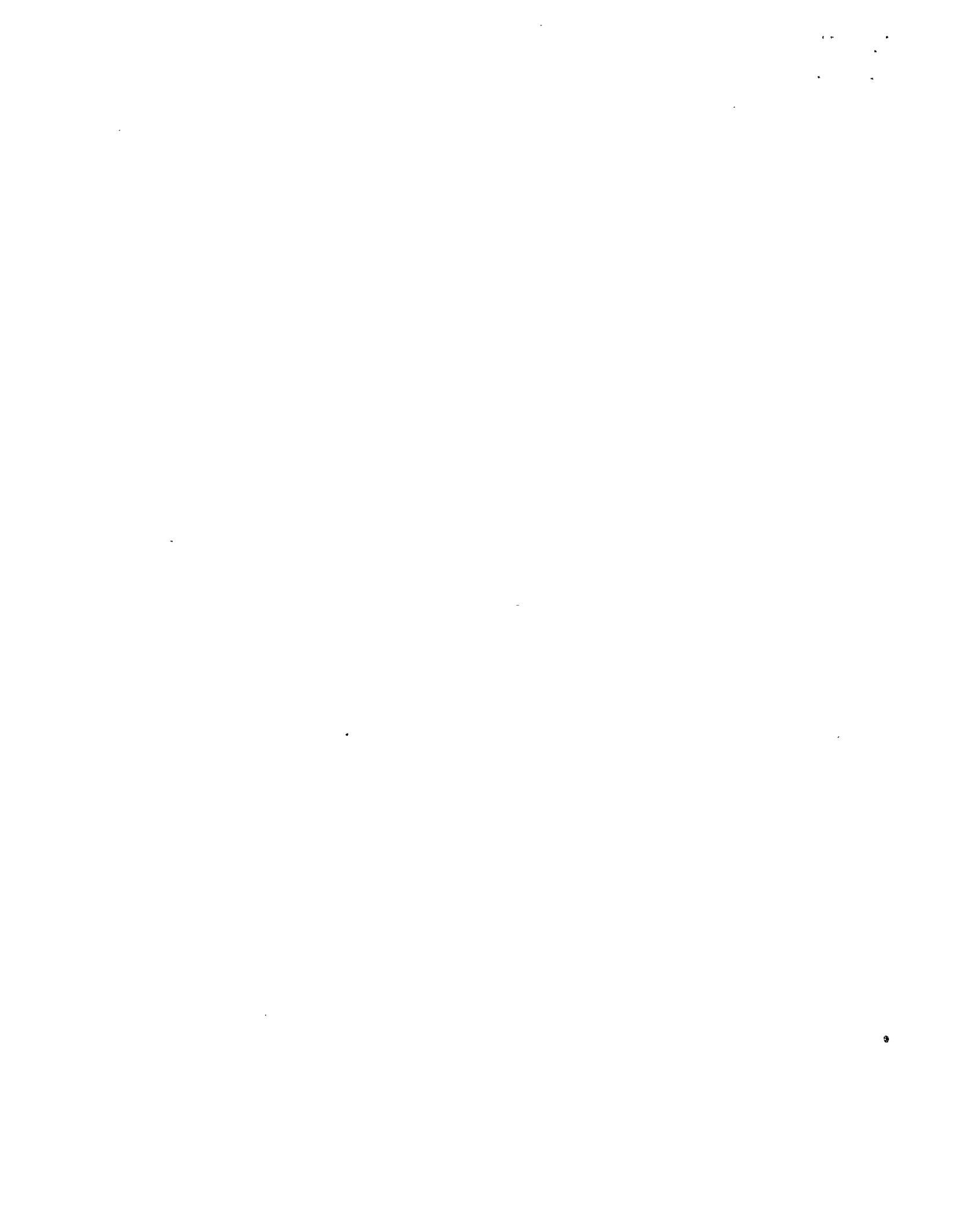
I have been privileged to know Jim Webb as a friend and colleague, as well as a demanding taskmaster, and I have enormous respect for his accomplishments in administration and public service. In considering how to respond to your request, I have reflected on his accomplishments and it occurs to me that perhaps the most unusual period in his career was the eight years he served as Administrator at NASA.

While in Washington, I came to accept the theory that after four or five years anyone serving in an important administrative position in the Executive Branch has accumulated sufficient enemies that his usefulness begins to deteriorate rapidly, particularly if he has responsibility for a large and visible program such as the space program.

In a truly remarkable way, Jim Webb was able to avoid this problem. Although public attitudes about the space program changed a good bit during his tenure as Administrator, he not only survived for two full Presidential terms but was able to run the agency in an outstanding manner with no serious controversies or scandals.

It seems to me that we too often focus on the inside aspects of the job of management, failing to give proper attention to the requirement for a good manager to maintain those relationships between his organization and the environment in which it must operate which permits it to move ahead and get the job done. Jim Webb certainly demonstrated a remarkable grasp of this requirement and ability to execute it.

Thanks for your note and the opportunity to respond on a subject in which I am deeply interested. I hope my thoughts might be useful to you. I would, of course, enjoy seeing a copy of your paper when it is finished.



COMPLETE TEXT OF STATEMENT BY

CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN E. BURGER

WITH RESPECT TO JAMES E. WEBB'S
CONTRIBUTION TO MANAGEMENT

Shortly after being sworn in as Chief Justice, I met with President Bernard Segal of the American Bar Association, and others of America's most creative and distinguished public administrators to explore much-needed methods of improving the functioning of our Courts.

One of the greatest needs facing the Judiciary was to create a new profession of Court Managers. At that time, fewer people were trained to manage courts than to walk on the moon.

I asked Jim Webb, founder of the National Academy for Public Administration, to help found a unique institution to train Court Managers. He served on the Board of the new Institute for Court Management for several years. His keen interest in internal management, and his encouragement of possible solutions to financial problems, such as fund raising among prominent lawyers, led to the creation and good functioning of the Institute for Court Management, which has now produced a new profession. Though busy, he was kind and decent, always supportive and available for consultation on how best to deal with emerging problems with each of the first two Directors — Ernest Friesen, whose creative flair started the Institution, and Harvey Solomon, who directs ICM now and whom Jim Webb helped select. Typical of his efforts to stimulate young professionals, when he addressed the third graduating class, he encouraged them to keep

reading and learning, and impressed the students by citing about fifteen things he had read recently, explaining what he had learned from each of them.

When he asked not to be renominated because he could not attend all the meetings, other Board members said that if he could only attend one meeting a year, he would contribute more than most people who attend all meetings of a Board.

As you know, by a combination of statute and tradition, the Chief Justice serves as Chancellor of the Smithsonian Institution. When I became Chief Justice, I could foresee heavy time demands, both in judicial decision making and in overcoming the extensive deferred maintenance in judicial administration. In addition, the Smithsonian was undertaking many new programs and projects.

Consequently, I concluded that to assure that the Smithsonian Board carry out its responsibilities effectively, it was critical to appoint the most sagacious analyst of major programs and institutional operations I could find to serve as Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Board of Regents. James Webb was the obvious choice. He served with loyalty and commitment, and helped assure an effective decision-making process and a spectacular set of achievements during the past eight years — a period in which the Smithsonian budget almost tripled. In recent times, he has been

helping to bring the internal management abreast of the new size and changed conditions relating to the Smithsonian.

Jim Webb has continually impressed his colleagues with the fountain of ideas and practical insight he contributes. Among the qualities which he demonstrates are:

1) A profound, yet clear, recognition that organization, leadership and administration are critical to the success of an institution, although this is rarely recognized in the Judiciary and in many other professions in the sciences and arts.

2) The ability to divorce personal interests from problems at hand and to approach problems objectively, blending humane considerations with solid tough-minded conclusions.

3) An ability rapidly to digest new facts and to analyze them.

4) Avoidance of ritualistic formulas while drawing on both theory and rich experience, brilliantly and creatively relating them to the special characteristics of the problems under discussion.

5) A capacity to illuminate many aspects of a problems without digression.

6) A remarkable ability to induce outstanding performance and the overcoming of discouragement in other people, both by stimulating them intellectually, as well as by showing high expectations and confidence in them.

7) A pervasive future orientation, offsetting sometimes excessive preoccupation of others with the past, and facilitating his commenting about probable consequences of virtually any proposed course of action.

In closing, I have had a life-long interest in what goes into making effective administration. I count Jim Webb as one of the people from whom I have learned the most about effective management.

COMPLETE TEXT OF STATEMENT BY

WILLIS H. SHAPLEY

WITH RESPECT TO JAMES E. WEBB'S
CONTRIBUTION TO MANAGEMENT

I believe it is fair to characterize the contributions to the development of management of James E. Webb as those of a doer deeply concerned with process rather than those of a theoretician concerned with management in the abstract or a technician concerned with management systems.

When Jim asked me to leave the Bureau of the Budget, where we had first met many years before, to join him, Dr. Hugh Dryden, and Dr. Robert Seamans in the leadership of NASA, he described my job as being "responsible for the processes by which we do our work." It took me quite a while but I ultimately came to understand what this meant and why it was so important.

He realized that the key to successful management of a large, complex agency like NASA was to ensure that each problem faced by top management was properly organized, i.e., that the managerial, institutional, and technical resources of the agency would properly be brought to bear on it. "Process" in his view was not merely a matter of procedure or even organization; it involved substance and depended on context as well. The job was to see that each problem was handled in a way that brought all the relevant substantive considerations and viewpoints into play so as to lead to the proper decision and at the same time strengthen the ability of the organization to deal with the next problem.

Webb's approach involved some departures from conventional management wisdom. For example, he disagreed with the common practice in government and elsewhere of "completed staff work" prior to presentation of a matter to a top executive for decision. He believed that one of the leadership responsibilities of top

*Bureau of the Budget 1942-1965; Associate Deputy Administrator, NASA, 1965-1975; currently consultant to the American Association for the Advancement of Science and various government agencies.

management was to organize itself so as to permit "guided staff work." Major matters should not automatically go to the line and staff offices to thrash out and prepare position papers and recommendations. The process should permit the flagging and early consideration of important problems by someone in top management, followed by explicit guidance to the staff on the substantive aspects of the matter and the process by which it is to be decided.

The organization of the central leadership of an enterprise has been one of Webb's principal interests. One of his lasting achievements as Under Secretary of State was the establishment of the Executive Secretariat as the central communications and switching center for the conduct and management of the departmental and worldwide operations of the Department of State. His concept of the Executive Secretariat went way beyond the mechanisms of a message center; he saw it as a place where substantive judgment would be applied to guide and expedite the business of the Department. In NASA he also established an Executive Secretariat, adapted to the different context. He devoted much personal attention to fine-tuning its organization and processes so that it would be an effective regulator of the flow of work without becoming a procedural bottleneck or an intervening bureaucratic layer between top management and the rest of the organization.

Webb's concerns with process extended beyond the internal management processes of the agencies he managed. He believed it equally essential for management to understand and work with the external processes that impinge upon the organization. He always saw NASA as a part of a constructive three-sided partnership of government, industry and universities, in which NASA should recognize the processes and potential of each of these sectors, work with them to achieve NASA's ends, and seek to strengthen them while doing so.

In the federal government, he believed in strong presidential leadership, supported by a professionally staffed Bureau of the Budget, and in working with the Congress through its own established leadership. As an agency head and

manager, he saw his responsibilities as both to work within the system and to make the system work. In the case of industry, he sought to adapt NASA's processes on procurement, patents, and other matters to take account of the processes, needs, and capabilities of industry, while at the same time preserving the government's interests and requiring a high standard of management in industry's conduct of government work. He saw very early the need to strengthen the leadership in our universities and waged a long, regrettably unsuccessful, campaign in the 1960s to get universities to accept and fulfill a broader institutional sense of responsibility, both for the management of their own affairs and for leadership to society.

He regarded the appreciation of these external considerations as an essential ingredient of successful management. As all who worked with him will always remember, he devoted a major portion of his leadership efforts to educating all levels of management on the importance of the broader external considerations-- forcing them to think about them, challenging them to find new ways of dealing with them. Some of his most important contributions to management have been and will be seen in the subsequent management achievements--in many government agencies, in industry, and in universities--of the large group of NASA managers he taught and inspired, by word and example.

James Webb was also deeply interested in the study of management. He regarded NASA management as an experiment, to be observed, evaluated, and learned from. He actively encouraged, and under his leadership NASA supported, many studies of NASA management by university and independent scholars. He looked on the NASA mode of operation as the harnessing of science, engineering, and management, and saw this as the necessary approach for achieving other goals and dealing with other problems. Having worked to help strengthen the National Academy of Sciences and to launch the National Academy of Engineering, he went on to be one of the leading founders of the National Academy for Public Administration. His insistence

on the importance of excellence in management, and its institutional embodiment in the third National Academy is surely one of his greatest contributions.

COMPLETE TEXT OF STATEMENT BY

JULIAN SCHEER

WITH RESPECT TO JAMES E. WEBB'S
CONTRIBUTION TO MANAGEMENT

There were certain guiding principles in Jim Webb's management of NASA that appeared to me to be unique -- and that set him apart from other managers I had known and with whom I had worked:

Opportunity -- Webb considered every request, every decision, every change an "opportunity" -- and in NASA's case, an opportunity to strengthen the base of the programs NASA espoused.

A routine request for information from a Congressman, for instance, could result in not only a prompt supplying of the information, but a detailed dissertation of the procurement base in his state or district, how the NASA system worked, usually an invitation to visit an installation, etc.

I remember when the late Senator Dirksen wrote for a small piece of information and the Assistant Administrator for Congressional Affairs answered a request -- obviously written by a staff member in a routine manner -- and the letter went back to Dirksen. Webb saw the reply in his reading file. He summoned the individual and, without fire or rancor, but in a tutorial tone, spoke of an "opportunity" missed. Dirksen was the Republican leader, we needed his enthusiasm and support; the routine request should not have been handled routinely.

When the Soviets did the first walk in space, the U.S. quickly followed with the same capability -- when Ed White walked in space. This was an example of Webb at his best within the Administration. He drafted a carefully worded memorandum to President Johnson. It was a masterpiece of hidden talk; it appeared that Johnson was on top of the situation, participated in a tough, momentous decision -- yet NASA made the decision and if the mission failed it was clear that Webb was the individual responsible. Webb encouraged Johnson to make the announcement -- thus Johnson was involved, the program got top-level recognition and importance, and the orchestration required no decision by the President.

Protection -- The above example also points out Webb's fierce desire and determination to run his own ship and make his own decisions. He could have passed the question to LBJ; he would not, never did. He reserved the final judgment for himself. But the major events had to be shared with the power structure and this Webb orchestrated.

Webb also made certain that his key managers were likewise protected. He would make the final hard decisions; conduct the debates with Congress; and fight the interagency battles. They were not to become engaged and were there to do their jobs free of external pressures. Only seldom did Webb bring those managers to Washington, for instance,

to appear before Congressional committees and, under these circumstances, they were welcomed as heroes, listened to as experts, and were protected from the daily slings and arrows that make up official Washington.

Perspective/Vision -- Webb had perspective. The above, again, points this out. Webb was unique because he started each day consciously putting the program in perspective with events around the world -- on university campus, foreign capitals, push for social reform (HEW, HUD both organized after NASA), etc. "How will this event impact us?" he'd ask. "Can we help the Congressman in his state," he'd ask; "he's having a hard time." "Do you think the White House understands what technology can do?"

He would come into his office with books, newspapers, pamphlets, magazines. In the height of the Gemini program he quoted a Thomas Wolfe passage to me he thought was apropos -- one he had read in "Look Homeward Angel" the night before.

This feel for history -- even as it was being made (perspective) -- was amazing. We went to the White House to a ceremony he suggested to LBJ where LBJ was to honor the JPL/NASA team which produced the first close-up Mars pictures in our early search for life on that planet. Our best speechwriter had labored over an excellent speech for the President. As the ceremony moved forward, Johnson was almost ready to speak. Webb was seated next to LBJ and I was next to Webb. Webb asked for the speech and I handed him Johnson's copy in a notebook with large type. Webb read it, thought a moment, took out a lead pencil and scribbled a last line. As LBJ read the speech, I followed it with my copy of the text. I had it all but the last line which Webb had penciled in. He caught the meaning, the mood and spirit of exploration of this event, this moment in time. LBJ read slowly and deliberately Webb's hurriedly penciled conclusion:

"It may be -- it just may be -- that life as we know it here on earth is unique."

Patriotism -- A management principle of Webb was patriotism. That may seem a contradiction, but Webb was fiercely patriotic and it was his goal to manage to improve the system -- to strengthen the ability of government to conduct its business using all the resources in and out of government. His managers were constantly imbued with the feeling that the nation was looking at how well NASA did its business. Our stewardship was under scrutiny. An underlying theme was to strengthen our sister agencies; Webb consciously sought "fellow-travelers," as he put it. "Let's get Interior involved," he'd say. Or, "This is too good, too useful not to be spread around."

(Webb's use of the airframe manufacturers, patent policy, etc., are enlightened examples of Webb's arrangement technique.)

Innovation -- Webb constantly sought new ways of doing things. Is there a better way to do this, he'd ask of a perfectly well-done job.

He was the first to look at technology transfer and coined, as far as I know, the term technology utilization.

He saw early on that valuable artifacts would be scattered across the country when flight programs ended -- and urged onto the Smithsonian a unique agreement whereby that institution became the repository; that agreement made the new Air and Space Museum what it is today.

A student of history, he urged case studies by scholars and encouraged NASA's professional historian. He saw the need to have the program seen through all eyes and started the art program in which the best artists -- realists to abstractionists -- Rockwell to Rauchenberg to Steinberg to Jamie Wyeth -- all painted the programs as they saw them.

Inspiration, Leadership -- Webb bubbled with new ideas, thoughts, concepts. They poured out. No hour was like the preceding hour. There was an excitement about Webb that permeated FOB 6 in Southwest Washington. On the Seventh Floor, things were vibrant when Webb was there, which was almost always. He was early in, late out. He read everything; he devoured facts; he asked questions endlessly; he prodded, pushed, encouraged -- he was annoyed, never mad or angry. He was scrupulously honest; he never cut a corner, never shaded a truth, never embroidered or expanded. He understood man and he sat at his desk and saw men and issues in constant movement and he applied his agency's role and resources against this fluxing world. He never made a decision for today or tomorrow -- always a decision was cast (even the smallest) with a vision very far into the future.