

Oct. 14, 2012

Distinguished Career Public Servant with 43 years of Government Service

George Hans Strauss, 88, a retired Federal employee specializing in personnel issues in the Office of the President, died on Oct. 10 at his home in Arlington, VA, with his wife of 52 years, Hilda, at his side. For the last five years, he had been suffering from Parkinson's disease.

After serving 25 years in the U.S. Army, George spent 18 years at the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), where he worked with 11 OMB Directors and under 5 Presidents, from Lyndon Johnson to Ronald Reagan. As former Director of OMB during the Carter Administration, James T. McIntyre stated recently: "George was a trusted and valued adviser to me as Director of the Office of Management and Budget and was a highly professional public servant."

George Strauss was born in Vienna, Austria on July 20, 1924, to Lily Friedman and Theodore Strauss. His father rose to the rank of lieutenant in the Austrian Army during World War I, which was unusual for a Jew, and later became a successful businessman. His mother instilled in George a sense of intellectual curiosity and great love of books. By January 1939, alarmed by persecution of Jews in the Third Reich, his parents sent George and his sister, Gerda, to Brussels, Belgium. Reunited with his parents in Brussels shortly thereafter, the family immigrated to New York city in 1939. George continued his education there, obtaining a B.S. and M.A. in Economics from City College of New York and Columbia University.

Enlisting in the U. S. Army in 1943, George became a tech sergeant in the infantry and military police in England and France. He joined the U.S. Army Quartermaster Corps in 1949. His duties included supply, procurement, personnel, intelligence, and military compensation activities. He retired as a lieutenant colonel in 1968. His tours of duty took him to Japan during the Korean War with an anti-aircraft artillery battery, to Germany as an intelligence officer, and to Thailand as an Army advisor on procurement issues. He was awarded the Army Commendation Medal, the Bronze Star, and Legion of Merit for his military service.

As the section chief and deputy director of the First Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation (QRMC) in 1966 to 1968, George was instrumental in developing the report and its recommendations. Although there have been a total of eleven of these reviews, the first is still known as one of the very best studies on this topic, recalled Tom Stanners, a former Chief of Operations in OMB's National Security Division. An Assistant Director at OMB at the time, Roger Jones, was so impressed with George's performance on the QRMC that he recruited George to join OMB in 1968.

George's tenure at the Bureau of the Budget, which became OMB in 1970, began as a personnel and compensation specialist, where he rose to become a member of the Senior Executive Service, with responsibilities for oversight of government-wide instructions on preparation of Federal Budget, central control of Federal civilian employment, implementation of zero-based budgeting during the Carter administration, and from 1982 to 1986, central coordination for OMB and the White House for review and approval of cost control recommendations of the Grace Commission appointed by President Reagan. He was a great source of institutional knowledge in OMB and a well respected colleague, mentor, and friend to the career and political staff at OMB, as well as many others throughout the Federal Government. Awards received during his career included a Civil Service Special Commendation and OMB Exceptional Service Award. After retiring in 1986, he consulted part-time on budget and health issues.

Both during his career and in retirement, George remained an active participant in a variety of professional organizations. He was a member of the American Association for Budget and Program Analysis (AABPA), on the Board for many years, and President of the Association in 1986-87. He

received AABPA's Distinguished Service Award in 1987 and 1996. He was also President of Public Financial Publications, Inc., a non-profit publisher of a quarterly professional journal on budgeting, evaluation, and public finance. Due to his interest and knowledge in military compensation and benefits, he became a member of the Health Committee of the Military Retiree Council of Fort Myer, VA in 1993 and became Chair of that group in 1996. For 25 years, he was a regular attendee at of the Manpower Roundtable, a group of retired and current government experts in personnel and Federal budgeting, who gathered to discuss issues of common interest.

He maintained his interest in his Austrian heritage throughout his life, returning to Vienna on regular trips, refreshing his fluency in German, and revisiting favorite sites of his youth. He retained strong connections to Austrian relatives and friends, including General Heinz Scharf, former Chief of Staff of the Austrian Army. He traveled widely around Europe with his wife and close friends, skied in the Austrian Alps numerous times, and enjoyed visiting the elegant Austrian resorts and casinos.

After Steven Spielberg launched the Shoah Foundation in 1994, George was interviewed on his recollections of the Holocaust, as a part of that organization's effort to collect video testimonies of survivors and other witnesses to the Holocaust. His recording is one of nearly 52,000 interviews in 56 countries and in 32 languages.

He met his wife, Hilda, in her native Berlin in 1958, when he was on military duty there. After marrying in December 1958, they relocated to Fort Lee, Virginia for four years, followed by Army tours in Thailand, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and assignment to Washington, D.C. in 1966. At the Pentagon, George served on the Army General Staff and in the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

He is survived by his wife Hilda, sister Gerda Strauss, and cousins, Les and Laura Sonnenmark Edie and David Blitzstein, Susie Robbins, and Michelle Frisch. After a heart bypass in 1981, George went on to live a long, productive, and rewarding life. He will be remembered for his courtly demeanor, intellectual curiosity, and keen interest in biography, World War II history, and politics. He will be greatly missed by his relatives, colleagues, and his many good friends.