

ON SHOW

# WALL-TO-WALL KENNEDY

By **ANDREW PURVIS** BERLIN

WHEN JOHN F. KENNEDY VISITED BERLIN IN JUNE 1963, the Berlin Wall had been standing for only two years. The cold war was settling in for a long freeze. West Berliners were dismayed by the West's seeming lack of concern about their city's partition. It was a time when well-chosen words could change history.

"The legendary morale and spirit of the people of West Berlin have lit a fire throughout the world," Kennedy said to roars of approval from a rapturous crowd. But it was this line that would be remembered: "Today, in the world of freedom, the proudest boast is *'Ich bin ein Berliner!'*"

Disputed ever since has been the degree to which Kennedy mangled his German, transforming his intended declaration of solidarity—"I am a Berliner!"—into the less inspiring, "I am a jelly donut." Whether giggles today about his supposed gaffe are warranted or not, Berliners on that day knew exactly what he meant, and they loved him for it.

It's in the spirit of that quote that Berlin's the Kennedys, the first museum of its kind outside the U.S., was recently opened. It displays original and vintage Kennedy-clan photos, including familiar images and some previously unseen; film footage of his visit and seemingly random artifacts—from Ace bandages the President is

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supposed to have worn to his plastic comb. The museum is operated by Camera Work, a local photo company whose owners are ardent collectors of Kennedy memorabilia. Curator

Andreas Etges, who also teaches history at Berlin's Free University, says the museum seeks to underscore how the Kennedys were not mere passive subjects of the camera. They became a legend, he says, "not just because they were rich and photo-

genic, but because they understood the media."

Etges' theory is certainly backed up by this fine collection. But for older Berliners, the best part of the new museum may be its location: the heart of what was East Berlin, next to the famous Brandenburg

**YOUNG HOPEFULS Kennedy and John Jr. in Rhode Island in 1963**

Gate. An area that was once ringed by razor wire and overlooked by watchtowers, it's now a place that you can visit whenever you choose. tel: (49-30) 20 65 35 70; [thekennedys.de](http://thekennedys.de)



ROBERT KNUDSEN—JOHN F. KENNEDY LIBRARY BOSTON/CORBIS

GOING GREEN

## A WALKING ADVERTISEMENT

**EVER WONDER WHAT HAPPENS TO OLD BILLBOARDS?**

Probably not. But French entrepreneur Jean-Marc Imberton and designer Marie-Angèle Godot did, and what they found spurred them to action. "We realized there was a huge problem," says Imberton, of the giant polyvinyl chloride (PVC) advertising posters common to most cityscapes and beltways. "Their lifespan is very short and they're practically indestructible. Some of them stay up for months, others are used only for an evening. We wanted to give them a second life."

So their company, Reversible, decided to morph the everlasting stuff into a hip line of handbags and totes. Together with a small team of artisan workers in Vaulx-

en-Velin near Lyons, they scissor out the best graphics to produce one-of-a-kind carry-alls. But more than just an original fashion accessory, Imberton sees them as a "modest" initiative to develop an environmentally responsible solution. Only a tiny

fraction of billboards in France are recycled. Removed from their supports, some end up on farms, tossed over woodpiles or machinery. Others are burned, which, if not done properly, releases dioxins into the air.

Reversible collects the used billboards from Lyons producer La Cotonnière, cleans them, and delivers the scraps to Texyloop, a plant that processes the PVC for reuse. The bags' \$66-119 cost helps finance the group recycling effort. And what happens when your bag wears out? Each one comes with a self-addressed PVC envelope so that it can be returned—to be re-

processed. [www.reversible.fr](http://www.reversible.fr)

—By Tala Skari

