

THE STORY
OF
INTERNATIONAL HOUSE
AND
INTERNATIONAL TRADE MART

by

ALonzo G. Ensenat
1974

*With grateful acknowledgement
for contributions by:*

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Pendlton Lehde

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Kenneth Barranger

Captain J. W. Clark

Delta Steamship Co. (Mississippi Shipping Company)

Family of William Zetzmann, Sr.

George Healy, Jr.

Mrs. Mae Lagan

Miss Goldie Moore

One cannot be in New Orleans for long without hearing of International House and of International Trade Mart in the press, on TV and radio, or being invited to a function at either of these two institutions. One has only to look toward the head of Canal Street, our main and wide thoroughfare, to see a visible monument to New Orleans' internationalism in the towering International Trade Mart building.

How did all this come about? What made New Orleans the natural soil for such consciousness of the worth and importance of international trade? Obviously it was necessity born of its very geographical location. Trade is the lifeblood of New Orleans, and the Mississippi River at its door gave that trade a magic impulse that made New Orleans grow from a humble village on the fringes of a wilderness in the mid-1750's to the modern metropolis it is today. But it takes men, ideas, and ideals to make for tangible progress. How did International House and International Trade Mart come into being?

Well, it was such a casual, natural thing, the way it happened. Let us go back to the days of World War II - then New Orleans was enjoying a tremendously augmented volume of commerce in and out of its port. It was so well handled as to have New Orleans classified by the War Department as the most efficient seaport being used for the war effort.

Among the men most closely associated with the movement of all these cargoes was Mr. E. O. "Archie" Jewell, who at the time occupied the position of General Manager of the Port of New Orleans. Amid his day-to-day duties he foresaw the time when peace would come and the volume of commerce would settle back to smaller tonnages through the port. He concluded that a very conscious and determined effort should be made to encourage peacetime trade to come still through New Orleans.

He must have devoted much thought to this projection into the future, for in 1942, the first year of the United States' involvement in the war, he was discussing with several of the members of his Board of Commissioners of the Port of New Orleans (popularly called the Dock Board) his ideas not yet fully formulated. It happened that Mr. Jewell was a member of the first Toastmasters Club of New Orleans: a group usually of about thirty persons who meet informally for dinner and select some of their members to be the after-dinner speakers, thus improving themselves in public speaking through practice and mutual constructive criticism.

In early March of 1943 at one such dinner meeting of a Toastmasters Club, held at the New Orleans Athletic Club's Trophy Room, Mr. Jewell chose for the subject of his three-minute speech the theme he had been developing in his mind and argued in his speech for the adoption of "a plan to consolidate the interest of all interested parties by forming an organization that would coordinate the cultural, social and commercial relationship between the people of our country with the people of other countries of the world, particularly the other American Republics".

The idea was enthusiastically received by those present and Mr. Alfred M. Cowen made a motion that Jewell's idea be followed up in order to find ways and means to implement it. A committee of six men was appointed by the Toastmaster Club President. C.C. "Bud" Walther, consisting of Cowen, Hebert Hiller, Alonzo G. Ensenat, Kay Blue, Joe Gumble, and Jewell, with Walther as an ex-officio member. This Committee agreed to meet weekly at Kolb's Restaurant to develop and refine Jewell's idea. They came up with two suggested names for the new organization: "Pan American Club" or "International House". Jewell expanded in writing on the kind of organization that should be formed. Jewell's presentation was both farsighted and even prophetic. Most of his recommendations form the major part of today's activities at International House.

Then what should they do next? Why of course present the idea to the men who had headed another effort that was orientated toward Latin America: Mr. Rudolph S. Hecht and Mr. William G. Zetzmann, Sr. But why these particular men? It had been proposed back in 1939 to hold a Pan-American Fair in New Orleans in 1942 on the 450th Anniversary of Columbus' discovery of our Hemisphere at which the products and produce of all countries of the New Hemisphere would be exhibited and thus foster trade among these nations. Mr. Rudolph S. Hecht, then Chairman of the Board of the Hibernia National Bank, and Mr. Zetzmann, a Director of the same bank, and some of their associates had become interested to the point of soliciting through State Representative Kenneth Barranger a grant of one million dollars from the Louisiana Legislature so long as the Federal Government would grant five million dollars more.

The idea had been presented by Mr. Hecht to then-Secretary of State Cordell Hull and was being actively considered when war broke out in Europe on September 1, 1939. It was decided then that the Pan-American Fair had best be shelved until the war was over. As Mr. Zetzmann, who had been elected President of the proposed Fair, remained active in internationally oriented affairs, it was to him that the Toastmaster Club committee first came.

Mr. Jewell was called out of town on the date appointed to see Mr. Zetzmann, so C.C. "Bud" Walther went and received an enthusiastic reaction from Zetzmann. So much so that Zetzmann suggested that the Committee expand and put in writing their ideas and he would invite fifteen leaders of New Orleans business life to meet with him at which time the Committee could make their presentation.

This meeting was held in the Board Room of the Hibernia Bank with Mr. Hecht presiding. Mr. Hecht was an internationally known banker, had been President of the American Bankers Association and possessed of enormous energy. He became very interested in the project and the many ideas he contributed no doubt went far to put the project into viable form.

To those men present at this meeting in the Hibernia Board Room, the idea presented seemed most timely and useful. Mr. Hecht felt that now the backing, financially and otherwise, by a larger group was needed. He suggested that invitations be sent to some

125 leading businessmen to a luncheon, which was held at the Roosevelt Hotel (now the Fairmont Hotel) in mid-July 1943.

At that luncheon after the concept or idea was presented, Mr. Hecht and Mr. Zetzmann asked the assembled group if any would be willing to pledge funds toward the foundation of such an institution as described. The response was unbelievable. The steamship companies there represented volunteered the first pledges of money contributions. Mississippi Shipping Co. (now Delta Line of which Mr. Hecht became Chairman of the Board) pledged \$15,000, for example. Mr. Andrew Higgins, Sr., the famous shipbuilder, was present and remarked that steamship companies would be the first to benefit from the efforts of the proposed institution, and why did they contribute only \$15,000? He would match the largest amount any steamship company would contribute and so it was that \$25,000 was contributed each by the Higgins Industries and by Mississippi Shipping Co. and the ball rolled on and on.

About the same time Mr. Zetzmann felt that to sell an idea a tangible object had to be presented. So, on his own volition, he bought the old Citizens Bank Building at 620 Gravier Street and tendered it to the institution now aborning for its headquarters. Brochures and publicity were prepared, frequent meetings were held by a core of interested men headed by Messrs. Hecht and Zetzmann. Committees were appointed to select a site, to formulate membership plans, etc.

We recall meetings during that summer of 1943 at Mr. and Mrs. Hecht's beautiful villa at Pass Christian where at luncheons under the shade of a long vine-covered arbor surrounded by their many oriental garden mementos, discussions ensued that led to the adoption of a proposed charter and proposed by-laws, defining the manner of financing the new institution after its name was selected: "International House".

It would have "Founder Members" who would contribute to the capital fund of the institution. Also "Sustaining" and "Active" members. It would be "A Center for Interchange of Culture and Trade" as its initial brochure stated.

Trade and Commerce were emphasized as the aim of the organization but so that it would be a living, palpitating institution and not a simple commercial office, there would be club facilities that would attract people, visitors and dignitaries to luncheons, dinners, social functions, all a part of the slogan suggested for International House's use by Mrs. T. Hale (Lindy) Boggs, our charming and much loved Congress-person: "Dedicated to world peace, trade and understanding". The then-Governor of Louisiana, Sam Jones, gave his total support to the project, as witnessed by his enthusiastic letter to Mr. Zetzmann of August 17, 1943 written after Mr. Jewell had made a personal presentation to him.

An Organization Committee was formed, stationery printed, showing Mr. Zetzmann as its Chairman; Hale Boggs was employed as its first Secretary and Edward F. LeBreton Sr., a Vice-President of Hibernia National Bank, acted as Treasurer.

By November 1943 the publicity generated during the previous months had fanned enthusiasm greatly and more contributions were received in answer to a multiple of letters written by members of the Organization Committee to many~ business connections each of them had. Parenthetically, it should be mentioned that during the war years there was imposed an excess profit tax, and since contributions to International House were considered tax-deductible thanks to an intelligent presentation to Washington of International House's nature and objectives by Mr. Hecht, contributions continued.

Such was the response from business interests that it became obvious that the former Citizens Bank Building Mr. Zetzmann had purchased would not be large enough to accommodate the increasing number of applicants for membership. So Mr. Hecht initiated the efforts to purchase the former Louisiana Bank & Trust Co. building then facing Camp Street at the corner of Gravier Street. Mr. Zetzmann then sold the Citizens Building.

Now the Louisiana Bank Building had to be remodeled to serve the purposes of the new organization. Architects were engaged, engineers too, and plans developed to transform the banking room and upper floors of the old Louisiana Bank Building into the beautiful quarters you can now enjoy as International House.

Now also began solicitation for memberships. A list of worthwhile candidates for membership was parceled out among the leaders of the group: Theodore Brent, Jewell, Hecht, Zetzmann and LeBreton Sr., A.B. Patterson Sr., President of New Orleans Public Service Inc., Mr. George Terribery, attorney, as well as others. Letters were written also soliciting pledges and in they did come. Mr. Pendleton E. Lehde, a nationally known engineer and shipbuilder, and Dr. Alton Ochsner Sr., a world-renowned surgeon, were among those responding.

Other contributions came in to such an extent that on December 28, 1943 the Organization Committee authorized Mr. Zetzmann to announce to all subscribers that "the minimum goal of \$250,000 of subscriptions has now been exceeded", but it was decided to make no public announcements of the definite establishment of International House at that moment, until plans for an announcement coupled with simultaneous worldwide publicity were completed.

Favorable comment continued to come in. Charles Nutter, who was later to have such an active role with International House, wrote on November 22, 1943 from his post in Kansas City with Associated Press to Mr. Hecht congratulating him on International House and asking Hecht to consider him a friend of that idea.

Now at the end of 1943, Hale Boggs resigned, as Secretary to return to his career which was to make him a nationally and internationally respected leader. International House, as it grew, had in him a constant and loyal friend.

So at the beginning of 1944, it was fairly certain that the project could go forward, having sufficient funds pledged to accomplish all needed remodeling and having projected income to operate comfortably in the black. So the Charter was filed in Baton Rouge and on January 20, 1944 Zetzmann wrote to Founder Members (Contributors) to attend a meeting on Tuesday, January 25, 1944 to elect Directors of International House.

Included among the first Directors are those earliest mentioned in this story:

Jewell, Ensenat, Walther, Joseph Gumble, as well as many prominent men in business and the professions.

The Directors elected Mr. Hecht Chairman of the Board, Mr. Zetzmann President and the other officers elected were:

Adolph E. Hegewisch, First Vice-President
Theodore Brent, Vice-President
Crawford H. Ellis, Vice-President
William H. Trauth, Vice-President
Edward F. LeBreton, Sr., Treasurer
Kenneth C. Barranger, Secretary

The Directors' first meeting on Friday, January 28, 1944 at 4:45 p.m. followed a worldwide radio broadcast announcing the establishment of International House. This radio broadcast was famous because it was conspicuous by its presence in the middle of a war to have merited inclusion by the networks, and featured a Washington-hookup at which Nelson Rockefeller, then Coordinator of Latin American Affairs, spoke. He referred to International House as "Our Good Neighbor Policy in Action". He praised its aims and congratulated the men who had made it possible.

(It is interesting to note that International House's dedication to "World Peace, Trade and Understanding", first used in late 1943, was later, November 4, 1946, to be used by UNESCO in substance, if not verbatim.)

Much publicity was created by this dedication broadcast and a list of media used to spread the good news includes the Christian Science Monitor, New York Times, St. Louis Post Dispatch and many others. Mr. Zetzmann's speech at that dedication recounts the efforts and the great enthusiasm that met the idea of creating International House, which spoke well for its support and success in the future in contributing to the prosperity of our area and the Mississippi Valley.

it is interesting to note that Mr. Brent made a suggestion in early January 1944 not only as to proposed changes in the By-Laws but also as to including women in the composition of the Board of Directors. Names submitted included Mrs. Jose Banos, Mrs. Alvin P. Howard, Mrs. Crawford H. Ellis. It was decided to have these and other socially prominent ladies serve on an Advisory Committee. Their work has helped

create an aura of social prestige and eligibility to International House in its non-commerce activities.

Now the day-to-day business activities had to be organized. Mr. Hecht had suggested employing Herman G. Brock, formerly an officer with Guaranty Bank in New York City, as the first paid Manager of the organization. He was here but a few months from March 1944, when personal affairs forced him to withdraw. To succeed him, Nelson Rockefeller's office was contacted: thanks to the help of George Healy, Jr., then on active duty with the U.S. Office of War Information in Washington, J. Stanton Robbins was elected Managing Director beginning January 1, 1945. He had worked in Rockefeller's office and had prior experience in world travel agency work.

It was George Healy Jr. who also helped get priorities during the war-time period for scarce materials needed to remodel the building International House was to use, especially the air-conditioning equipment then very scarce and requiring priorities. Nelson Rockefeller was also asked to intercede by Mr. Hecht and the result was the completion of the remodeling work on schedule.

While the remodeling work was being designed the Directors were busy refining the proposed By-Laws. These were adopted at a special meeting of the Directors on March 22, 1944, held in the Board Room of the Association of Commerce, now Chamber of Commerce of Greater New Orleans Area. By now regular luncheon meetings were being held by an Executive Committee elected by the Directors, usually on Tuesdays. By May 23, 1944 Mr. LeBreton, Treasurer, was able to report that a total of \$348,000 had been pledged by Founder members and \$7,500 by sustaining members.

In late-May 1944 Herbert A. Benson, referred to in correspondence as "Our Architect", met with the Directors and plans were developed but later these, in September 1944, had to be altered after bids were in since the latter were much higher than the original estimates. Specifications were revised and the contract to remodel was awarded to Gervais F. Favrot for \$167,912, the low bid.

The remodeling took place during the remainder of 1944 and many months of 1945. We can recall many visits to the area, walking under scaffolding and debris, to watch, as an eager parent would, the birth of a new concept, an idea that was to serve New Orleans well.

The main entrance to the International House building was changed from one fronting on Camp Street to one facing Gravier Street. This freed a large area downstairs that had been the banking floor. It was decided to leave a Grand Hall with its cathedral ceiling the bank floor had and to construct a mezzanine on the other two thirds of that banking area, which today are the downstairs dining room and bar and the upstairs lounge and Spanish Room. A beautiful staircase made of marble was designed and installed. Paneling for the Grand Hall was carefully selected from Honduras mahogany. Other accouterments came from many parts of the world resulting in what is still today an elegant and fastidiously appointed establishment.

A contest was held for the design of an emblem "that will symbolize the activities and aims of International House". The now well-known expanded horizontal expression of the earth resulted and it now decorates the facade of the remodeled building.

And the work was completed, International House became a reality for by June 8, 1945 a formal Inaugural Dinner for the Directors was held. Included in the menu was "International House Turtle Soup" which to this date is considered the golden apple of its kitchen. Before that June date there had been a week of preview functions. Governor Jimmie H. Davis came down from Baton Rouge to congratulate the Directors. The local and the national press were generous in their praise of the project. The Publicity Manager of International House, Pierre Villere Sr., later was to say that the phenomenal acceptance and publicity accorded International House was just "a natural" so well received was the idea.

Membership grew and the fees members agreed to pay soon gave the new organization a sufficient recurring income each year. So progress was continuous and more ambitious plans could now be contemplated and adopted. World War II was to end in August of that year (1945) and the mettle of the organization's raison d'etre was to be put to a test as cargoes changed dramatically from war commodities to civilian needs.

During the closing months of 1945, Robbins resigned to return to his first-love, travel agency work in New York City. Charles Nutter was approached and resigned his post with Associated Press to accept the Managing Directorship. His penchant for publicity and knowledgeable ways to get it proved a boon for the organization. His calm way and old-shoe informality made the new people within the organization jell well. (He remained with International House for over ten years and left to take another position elsewhere and later to edit his own newspaper in Mississippi.)

Nutter expanded the organization's activities. To promote trade, he employed Michael Mora to encourage exports. To foster imports, he employed George Ziwick. Later these two departments were to be merged into one Trade Promotion Department headed by Mrs. Tina Ensenat Herlinger for over ten years; it is now headed by Mrs. Florencia Hammond. The number of actual transactions put together by this Trade Promotion Department as it sought out suppliers of merchandise a foreigner wrote in to inquiry about, or that an American supplier wrote in wanting to sell abroad, grew and earned for International House in those crucial first years an outstanding reputation for promoting trade.

In June 1945, a new board of Directors was elected. The list of names which appeared in the local press includes many of the leaders in manufacturing, commerce, shipping, banking and professions. Then as succeeding Boards were elected it was the practice for the President's term to be two years, although this rhythm was later changed to a one-year term. Adolph Hegewisch was the Second President, followed by: Lloyd Cobb, Robert Elliot, C.C. Walther, Richard Jones, Joseph Rault Sr., Richard Freeman Sr., George Dinwiddie, Capt. Neville Levy, Dr. Alton Ochsner, Lawrence Molony, Zac

Carter, Sterling Dunn, Arthur Jung, Jr., Richard Hindermann, Edward Rowley, Thomas Winkler, J. Luis Banos, and John Laborde.

Today the President is energetic and youthful Frederick Ingram.

During the intervening years and until his death in 1956, Mr. Hecht acted as Chairman of the Board. He never lessened his interest and support of International House. He and the companies with which he was associated contributed financially and often. The thoughts, ideas and hours of his devotion to this project no doubt helped it to grow into the successful and financially solvent organization it is today. It is fitting that his portrait should hang on an International House wall.

International House has consistently remained in solvent condition during the three decades or more it has been in existence thanks to the membership rolls that kept increasing, a fitting tribute to the men who first organized it on a sound financial basis and to the capable men who have been its Managing Directors.

It was only fitting, therefore, that the week of November 14 to 19, 1946 should have been declared "International Week" when New Orleans' beloved Mayor deLesseps Morrison and most trade and civic organizations joined in focusing public attention on International House and other organizations that fostered foreign trade, the inauguration of the Moisant International Airport, the dedication of the Foreign Trade Zone and on the initiation of construction of International Trade Mart, about which we shall soon learn more.

Such was the success of International House since it was first presented that not long after the initial discussions were taking place in 1944, this thought presented itself: if we succeed in drawing many Latin American and foreign buyers and sellers to our International House, what are we going to do with these traders? They will want to see the merchandise they wish to buy and to treat directly with its producer or its seller. New Orleans is essentially a port and not predominantly a manufacturing center. Why send a man to St. Louis if he wants to buy shoes or to Chicago if he wants to buy steel or to Toledo if he wants glass? Why not bring the products to New Orleans for exhibition? So the idea of an International Trade Mart was conceived in late 1944 first by leaders of our YMBC and enlarged upon in 1945 by the same group of civic leaders headed by Mr. Hecht and Mr. Theodore Brent, a close associate of Mr. Hecht's in Mississippi Shipping Co. and head of his own Coastal Barge Line.

Having the experience of organizing International House behind them, it did not take as long to finalize plans for International Trade Mart, as the former's sister organization was to be called. A Charter was signed on November 21, 1945 by eight leaders of this city.

In all 41 persons were named to its first Board of Directors, namely: Lester F. Alexander, E.V. Benjamin, Jr., C.A. Bertel, Durel Black, Theodore Brent, J.H. Bull, Lloyd J. Cobb, C. Earl Colomb, Theodore Dendinger, Charles I. Denechaud, A.G. Ensenat,

A.B. Freeman, Charles Godchaux, B.M. Grunewald, R.S. Hecht, E.O. Jewell, Pendleton E. Lehde, Robert Lienhard, R.K. Longino, Dave Manget, S.V. Massimini, Joseph W. Montgomery, R.M. Nash, Leonard K. Nicholson, Ralph Nicholson, Frank S. Norman, Charles Nutter, A.B. Paterson, E.V. Richards, Jr., Raphael Ross, W.H. Saunders, Jr., George E. Schneider, Herbert I. Schwartz, C.A. Spurl, Jr., C.G. Staubitz, E.A. Stephens, Edgar B. Stern, Percival Stern, Frank E. Toye, Seymour Weiss, William G. Zetzmann.

A nearby building, the A. Baldwin & Co. structure, at the corner of Camp and Common Streets offered a suitable location both as to closeness to International House and as to the amount of rentable space it contained. An option was obtained to purchase it.

These newly elected Directors of the Mart had chosen Mr. Theodore Brent as its President and met on January 10, 1946 to hire an architect-engineer firm to design changes in the Baldwin building that would transform it into a modern, attractive Trade Mart. And so the idea developed to include many feet of glass-lined corridors behind which commodities could be exhibited, it being the intention that the producers of the merchandise shown would be represented there and be able to quote prices and delivery schedules. In a written presentation Mr. Brent described what he envisioned a Mart should be and how it should function.

By contributing \$6,500 each, Messrs. Schwartz, Brent and Hecht created Mart Realty Co. Inc., in late-1945, which would be the vehicle to purchase, remodel and complete the physical Mart itself. The extent of the changes suggested for the exterior and interior of the Baldwin building have to be seen in photographs to be appreciated. Rathbone DeBuys, Architect, and Godat & Heft, Engineers, were employed by the organizers to do this job of transformation.

Meanwhile, efforts were under way to rent the space to worthwhile tenants. At this point, on January 19, 1946 Mr. Brent recommended Major Clay Shaw to become Manager of International Trade Mart, then existing only in architect plans and designs. Mr. Shaw had just returned to civilian life after a noteworthy four years in the armed services after receiving many decorations and Paving been distinguished for scoring the second-highest IQ rating of any inductee up to that time.

A pamphlet was printed spelling out the advantages of renting space in the new Mart and Mr. Shaw traveled far and wide to obtain leases from prospects whose names were obtained from all subscribers.

But how was all this to be financed? An ingenious method was developed:

the improved building would naturally have a greater value than it formerly had. Pan American Life Insurance Co. was willing to lend one half or about \$550,000, later increased to \$675,000 at 4% for 20 years; the other half would be represented by Junior Mortgage Bonds bearing 3% interest beginning in January 1948 when the Mart would be operative.

Remembering the interest expressed earlier by the Young Men's Business Club, they were approached to help with the sale of the Junior Mortgage Notes. Thanks to the enthusiastic response from YMBC's then President, Mr. C. Earl Colomb, a fantastically extensive and successful door-to-door campaign was carried out by that enthusiastic group of young businessmen. With the example set by New Orleans Public Service Inc. and Mississippi Shipping Co., each of whom bought \$50,000 of these junior mortgage bonds, all the remaining junior bonds were sold and the money put to earn interest until such time as needed to pay for remodeling the building.

So by November 22, 1946, a contract could be signed with Gervais F. Favrot Co. paying them a 10% fee (maximum \$50,000) and the work began to get bids. Changes had to be made in the architect's plans and also the Directors agreed to increase their own subscriptions by 20% and to buy more stock so as to meet the higher costs indicated by the bids received. It was not till mid-1947 that everything fell into place, the Baldwin building was bought for \$195,000 and Gervais F. Favrot Co. contracted to remodel it for \$649,752, plus other contracts for elevators, sprinklers, and air-conditioning.

All this represented many man-hours voluntarily given by the men to guide and direct the developing project, men whose own multiple business activities would ordinarily preclude their doing this.

Much credit is due Messrs. Hecht (Chairman), Brent, Schwartz, Paterson, Alexander, Zetzmann and Colomb, who as an Executive Committee guided the embryonic organization to its birth.

Meanwhile, Mr. Shaw's efforts brought fine tangible results and projections could be made of rental income from space leased (96% of rental space was under lease by 1949). Annual expenses could confidently be covered.

It is flattering to note that even in March, 1946 when the Mart was not yet a reality, Alfred J. Wardell, Jr., Deputy Commissioner, State of New York, Department of Commerce, Albany, New York wrote wanting to know about International Trade Mart, how it was organized and what were its aims. The Chicago Journal of Commerce carried news in April 25, 1946 of 'New Orleans Opens World Trade Mart'. The New York Times carried a flattering article.

A list of first tenants included David Kattan, Otis McAllister Co., Hemisphere Trading Co. (of which Alonzo G. Ensenat was Manager), United China & Glass Co., W. R. Grace & Co., S. Jackson & Son, Inc., Dictaphone Corp., Lily-Tulip Co., and Lucky Tiger Co.

Finally, by November 1948 invitations could be issued for a two-day celebration on the 29th and 30th of that month on the occasion of the "Formal dedication of the International Trade Mart". And an impressive building it had become with a global motif inserted in the mosaic floor at the entrance to its lobby, with clean, well-lighted corridors lined with merchandise of many lands and most of the amenities of a modern center of commerce.

At this juncture we may reflect on why was the Mart organized as a separate entity from International House when the two were devoted to parallel objectives?

One plausible explanation by Mr. Kenneth Barranger is that when it became fairly well defined how large would be the financial obligation to be undertaken to make the Mart a reality, many of the Directors of International House decided not to tie the assets of a going concern (for the House by mid-1945 was a going thing) to an as-yet unknown project and thus were separated the financing and later the activities of the Mart from those of the House. However, it was contemplated that at the operational level the two would work in tandem. There would be interlocking Boards of Directors. Mr. Hecht was Chairman of both Boards. Mr. Brent, the Mart's President, would be on both the Boards and on the Executive Committee of the House. Close cooperation between the two was expected and planned. This cooperation continued for many years, as for example in 1961 when Mr. Charles Nutter left the Managing Directorship of the House vacant, Mr. Clay Shaw, then Managing Director of the Mart, stepped in and managed both the House and the Mart for over a year until Dr. Paul Fabry came to the House.

The idea of joining the two organizations more closely and even merging them into one was conceived and persisted early in their respective histories, especially after each was operating profitably. Mr. Rudolph Hecht felt this should be done for the good of both. With that prospect in view the opportunity was seized upon to sell the original Mart building in 1955 to a New York group of investors and to lease it back from them. This freed capital funds and still permitted the Mart to operate as before until final consummation of the intended unification plan.

Now it was a matter of finding a suitable location where both of the organizations could be housed. Various locations were investigated based on the assumption that property owned by the City of New Orleans would be made available for a nominal annual rental, and this was the declared intention of our internationally minded Mayor deLesseps Morrison, for that would greatly facilitate financing the project. Two locations were seriously considered, one in the center of the plaza fronting the present City Hall (which the City Planning Commission vetoed) and the other the narrow but long area where the former Southern Railway passenger station stood at Canal Street and what is now Avenue of the Americas (formerly Basin Street). The latter was unsuitable because of underground installations, which brought objections from the Sewerage and Water Board. With uncanny foresight, and at the suggestion of Mr. Durel Black, Mr. Rudolph Hecht persuaded International Trade Mart to use their freed capital funds to buy two squares of ground near where Canal Street meets the Mississippi River, in what was then a depressed area of railroad tracks, warehouses and old buildings.

Meanwhile, Mr. Theodore Brent had passed on June 8th, 1953 and Mr. William G. Zetzmann Sr. became the Mart's second President on July 7, 1953, a post he held until his demise on April 13, 1962. During his term many efforts were made to amalgamate the two organizations. International House's Directors still felt they did not want to tie up their assets, if it came to that, to guarantee the projected building of a larger and finer

Mart. During this impasse the Mart had to operate on a declining amount of income as tenants began moving from the original Mart building to newer buildings going up in the central business district, while the Mart's rental to the new owners remained constant and squeezed its net income which went down until finally a deficit was produced.

In 1962, Mr. Lloyd I. Cobb became President. Considering the then-precarious financial condition of the Mart, he was just the person needed to breathe into that organization a new life. He had the stamina and bulldog determination to see International Trade Mart's revitalization through. And in time, as he himself told me, "the Holy Ghost came through the ceiling", meaning that when nothing seemed to work, a fortunate combination of circumstances developed when a Memphis-based builder, Bloomfield & Associates, and Cobb developed an ingenious and workable plan for building a new Trade Mart Building.

The land ITM had bought near the Mississippi River and Canal Street was the nucleus of the plan. Thanks to the cooperation of all concerned, the City of New Orleans, which owned much of the adjacent land, the State of Louisiana whose Agency, The Board of Commissioners of the Port of New Orleans, owned other pieces of the land also adjacent, and two railroads which had perpetual trackage rights on other pieces of land also adjacent, all the several parcels of land were put into a single unit, and this one deeded to the City of New Orleans. Thus Trade Mart's bonds could be sold as tax-exempt bonds at lower interest rates and in an amount of seventeen million dollars to finance the building of the new Trade Mart. The results were telling: With lower bond rates, lower rentals could be named and the new Mart building would fill up quickly.

And so it was that on March 29, 1961 the articles of incorporation of the New Orleans International Trade Building Corp. were signed by Zetzmann, Cobb, Lehde, Barranger, and Ashel Cooper Jr., an insurance executive also associated with the Hecht Estate, for the purpose of "constructing, acquiring, owning, leasing and operating" what was to be a new and grander building to house the International Trade Mart.

The building was constructed by Bloomfield at cost, with the provision that Bloomfield would share in the profits produced from rentals on a 50-50 basis for the first 20 years and on a basis of 75% to the Mart and 25% to Bloomfield thereafter until the 56th year of the building's erection, at which time title would revert back to the city of New Orleans.

It was quite a thrill to attend the Topping Out Ceremony held on July 6, 1965 and to read all the flattering things published in the press and broadcast on TV and radio about the new landmark for New Orleans. Even the Paris European English edition of the New York Herald-Tribune published a special supplement paying tribute to this new concept of global trade sponsorship. It is a beautiful building, designed by famed architect Edward Stone and now stands as a distinguishing symbol at the entrance to New Orleans harbor, just as the Sugar Loaf Mountain does at the entrance to Rio de Janeiro or the Statue of Liberty when entering New York Harbor.

So you can imagine the satisfaction and gratification that was Mr. Cobb's on April 30, 1968 when the formal Dedication Ceremonies took place, as part of a larger and combined celebration of the 250th anniversary of the Founding of New Orleans. Ambassadors of many countries came, there were parades, banquets and the Organization of American States held its first meeting outside of Washington, D.C. here in New Orleans on that occasion.

In his dedicatory speech Mr. Cobb stated what the aims of the new International Trade Mart would be: to act as a catalyst to develop trade and not be just a display area for foreign goods; to encourage and stimulate U.S. investors into joint enterprises with Latin Americans; to counter Communist propaganda; to give priority to educational projects; to foster a common market in the hemisphere; to work in friendship with other organizations and with the Inter-American Municipal Organization.

Many of these objectives are today's realities. International Trade Mart sponsors an interchange of teachers from Latin America to USA high schools and from USA to Latin American high schools and colleges, under the auspices of the Cordell Hull Foundation, which International Trade Mart administers. The Inter-American Municipal Organization's headquarters were housed in the Trade Mart for many years.

International Trade Mart conducts educational training programs for international executives in cooperation with local universities as well as a summer-study program at Latin American universities with participation by five universities in the south of the United States.

International Trade Mart participates in specialized trade missions in cooperation with Council of the Americas, a national trade association, and its impressively beautiful executive offices on the 29th floor are lent for use by business groups for meetings and for seminars. It has inaugurated its own series of seminars on trade problems of interest today. Recently one on trading with specific countries, Brazil, for example, was well attended by executives from firms in and outside of New Orleans. Another on trading and investing in South Korea followed. These seminars are often accompanied by exhibits of each country's products, artifacts and art in the spacious and beautiful entrance lobby of the new Mart. Sales from these exhibits often are surprisingly large.

An outside glass elevator affords its passengers a breathtaking view of the city as it glides thirty-one stories to an observation deck, part of which is glass-enclosed. There is housed a Maritime Museum - well worth visiting in order to visually appreciate the history and development of New Orleans' great port, as one views from that height the miles of wharves and many vessels from all over the world that is the port today and what the museum shows it was many years ago.

Locating the new Mart where it is portended a continuing development of that area at the head of Canal Street. To that end Mr. Clay Shaw helped immeasurably by a masterful presentation in speeches throughout the State stressing the advantages to New Orleans' and Louisiana's foreign commerce were the Dock Board to build a

convention and exhibition facility such as San Francisco was then building, this conviction being based on the historically accurate premise that commerce follows the visiting traveler. And so the Rivergate Convention and Exhibition Center was built facing the new Trade Mart and its appearance assured the renaissance of an area that a century earlier had been a busy, throbbing whirl of commerce across open wharves with packet steamers docked side by side and several deep in the Mississippi River.

The future plans of the James J. Colemans, the Lester Kabacoff group and the Joseph Canizaro group for that area now include a beautiful complex of parks, shops, offices, hotels, malls, tennis courts and gardens.

Even now France has donated and installed there a beautiful "Place de France" with a statue of Jean d'Arc, an exact copy of the one on Rue Rivoli, near the Louvre in Paris, and Spain is finishing a beautiful "Plaza de Espafia" on the riverside of the new Trade Mart, fitting symbols of our French and Spanish background when each of these countries governed here in the 1700's.

Each organization has been very successful in its own specialty and there is need for continuing cooperation.

So successful have been the appeal and performance of International House to foreigners that Dr. Paul Fabry has been visited by many officials from many cities from all over the world, who are interested in creating just such trade promotion centers in their own communities. And thanks to Dr. Fabry's foresight, a world-wide league has been formed of these trade centers called World Trade Centers Association, which was started right here at international House in New Orleans in 1968 by Dr. Fabry and of which he is Vice-President and Treasurer. This Association is part of a 90-member chain, which operates in 40 countries, provides 15-minute radio programs in Spanish which are beamed three times a week to South America from transmitters in Venezuela and Columbia. These broadcasts tell the story of the City and Port of New Orleans and cover topics of current international importance. The World Trade Centers in 1975 will provide the first worldwide-computerized information network of commercial data.

International House also is a depository of much valuable data; it has a unique library of over 15,000 volumes of trade dictionaries, statistical sources, government pamphlets and other reference books.

Its multi-lingual staff currently answers an average of 500 questions a month from business and professional community locally and also from World Trade Centers in 40 countries.

And in Bogota, Colombia a Trade Mart fashioned after our own is in existence in a forty-four story structure — literally the highest compliment our own Mart could receive, for imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Our own Mart in addition to its many activities already related, with great foresight included on its thirtieth floor what came to be named "The Plimsoll Club", an elegant and distinctively decorated meeting place which

has now made a reputation for itself as being the optimum for formal and informal receptions of internationally known personalities, Presidents, wives of Presidents, Ambassadors, leaders of Finance, and Directors of Ports throughout the world.

On Mr. Cobb's passing on November 27, 1972, Captain J.W. Clark was elected President of International Trade Mart and already his many talents, quiet assurance and charming manner have created an era of close cooperation between the Mart and the House; ambitious plans are being soundly thought out and jointly projected and in the next few years, with other like-minded leaders at the House, as is Mr. Frederick Ingram, we will see in our midst the fruitage of this constructive thinking.

So you can see how an idea, like an acorn, can grow and grow and become a catalyst to expand trade all over the world and to think it all started right here when a Toastmaster made a three minute after-dinner speech!