

**The original documents are located in Box 31, “5/8/76 - Remarks at the Dedication of the Harry S. Truman Statue, Independence, Missouri” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.**

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THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN... 26

PRESIDENT'S REMARKS AT DEDICATION OF STATUE OF

PRESIDENT TRUMAN

INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI

MAY 8, 1976

Acknowledgements - Truman Statue Dedication

Thank you, Governor Bond

Mrs. Margaret Truman Daniel

Distinguished Members of Congress:

Senator Humphrey	Congressman Symington
Senator Symington	Congressman Randall
Senator Curtis	Congressman Bolling
Senator Eagleton	

Mayor King

Dr. Jonas (Chairman, Truman Statue Committee)

Distinguished Guests

Friends and admirers of Harry Truman

SURROUNDED AS I AM BY OLD FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS  
OF PRESIDENT TRUMAN, IT WILL BE HARD AND PERHAPS FOOLHARDY  
TO TRY TO ADD ANYTHING TO THE AFFECTIONATE TRIBUTES ALREADY  
PAID HIM AS A PUBLIC SERVANT AND AS A MAN. BUT I HAVE A  
FEW MEMORIES OF MY OWN, SO I WILL TRY.

MR. TRUMAN WAS A GREAT STUDENT OF HISTORY,  
AND HE PARTICULARLY LIKED TO TALK ABOUT HIS PREDECESSORS AND THE  
QUALITIES EACH OF THEM BROUGHT TO THE PRESIDENCY.  
HE WAS REALLY EXPERT AT IT - ALLOWING FOR A LITTLE TILT  
TOWARD JEFFERSON, JACKSON AND HIS DISTANT KINSMAN JOHN TYLER.

THE REASON I KNOW THIS GOES BACK TO MY VERY

FIRST CLOSE-UP MEETING WITH HIM, IN FACT, MY VERY FIRST

TO THE WHITE HOUSE. IN THE 81st CONGRESS, I WAS A VERY

FRESHMAN MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, AND ON THE

MINORITY SIDE -- PRESIDENT TRUMAN HAD SEEN TO THAT. in 1948.

I HAD BEEN ASSIGNED A PLACE AT THE VERY BOTTOM OF THE

SENIORITY LADDER ON THE PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE AND ONE DAY

THE PRESIDENT INVITED ALL OF US DOWN TO VISIT HIM.

HE GREETED US VERY WARMLY AND ASKED IF WE'D  
LIKE A PERSONALLY GUIDED TOUR THROUGH THE HOUSE, AND WE GOT THE  
FULL LECTURE, NOT JUST THE PUBLIC ROOMS BUT UPSTAIRS THROUGH  
THE FAMILY LIVING QUARTERS.

PRESIDENT TRUMAN EXPLAINED ALL THE PORTRAITS AND POINTED OUT  
ALL THE CHANGES MADE BY FIRST LADIES ALL THE WAY BACK TO  
ABIGAIL ADAMS. BUT THE TOUR WASN'T ALL ANCIENT HISTORY.

THE PRESIDENT ALSO SHOWED US THE HOLE IN THE  
FLOOR IN MARGARET'S SITTING ROOM WHERE HER SPINET PIANO  
ATTEMPTED TO OBEY THE LAW OF GRAVITY. HE STOOD US UNDER  
THE HUGE CRYSTAL CHANDELIER THAT ALMOST CRASHED DOWN IN  
THE MIDDLE OF AN EAST ROOM RECEPTION.

HE POINTED TO THE SWAYBACK CEILING OF THE STATE DINING ROOM  
WHICH HE SAID WAS ONLY HELD UP BY FORCE OF HABIT.  
WE WERE ALL TREMENDOUSLY IMPRESSED, AND WE THANKED PRESIDENT  
TRUMAN AND TROOPED BACK UP TO CAPITOL HILL AND PROMPTLY  
VOTED HIM EVERY PENNY OF THE 5.4 MILLION DOLLARS HE WANTED  
TO COMPLETELY RENOVATE THE WHITE HOUSE.

SO I BROKE ALL THE ANTI-SPENDING PROMISES OF MY  
FIRST CAMPAIGN AND I WANT TO TESTIFY HERE TODAY THAT I'M  
GLAD AND GRATEFUL FOR PRESIDENT TRUMAN'S FORESIGHT AND  
CONCERN FOR FUTURE OCCUPANTS OF THAT BEAUTIFUL AND HISTORIC  
HOUSE - AND BETTY AND I ESPECIALLY ENJOY THE TRUMAN BALCONY•

THERE'S A SERIOUS SIDE TO THIS STORY OF PRESIDENT  
TRUMAN'S SKILL IN LOBBYING THE WHOLE PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE•  
HE WAS PROUD OF HIS POWERS OF PERSUASION, AND HE OFTEN SAID  
THE PRESIDENT IS THE ONLY PERSON IN WASHINGTON WHOSE JOB  
IS TO LOBBY ON BEHALF OF ALL THE AMERICAN PEOPLE•

AS A SENATOR FROM MISSOURI, HE HAD TO LOOK AFTER THE  
SPECIAL INTERESTS OF HIS STATE, BUT WHEN HE BECAME PRESIDENT,  
HE HAD TO THINK ABOUT THE INTERESTS OF THE WHOLE COUNTRY.  
THAT SOMETIMES GOT HIM INTO TROUBLE WITH CONGRESS, HE  
CONCEDED, AND WITH POLITICAL CRITICS NOT ONLY IN MY PARTY,  
BUT FROM BOTH THE LEFT AND RIGHT EXTREMES OF HIS OWN.

"WHEN A PRESIDENT DOESN'T HAVE A FIGHT OR TWO  
WITH CONGRESS," HE WROTE IN HIS MEMOIRS, "YOU KNOW THERE  
IS SOMETHING WRONG."



ALTHOUGH I WAS ON THE OTHER SIDE IN MANY OF THESE

CONTESTS, I NOW KNOW HOW PRESIDENT TRUMAN FELT.

I'M STILL TRYING BUT I HAVE A LONG WAY TO GO TO BEAT HIS

POSTWAR RECORD OF 250 VETOES.

DIFFER THOUGH WE DID ON A LOT OF ISSUES,

I COMPLETELY AGREE WITH MR. TRUMAN'S STERN CONCEPT OF

PRESIDENTIAL DUTY.

" A PRESIDENT CANNOT ALWAYS BE POPULAR,"

HE WROTE AFTER COMING HOME TO INDEPENDENCE.

"HE HAS TO BE ABLE TO SAY YES AND NO, AND MORE OFTEN NO,

TO MOST OF THE PROPOSITIONS THAT ARE PUT UP TO HIM BY

PARTISAN GROUPS AND SPECIAL INTERESTS WHO ARE ALWAYS

PULLING AT THE WHITE HOUSE FOR ONE THING OR ANOTHER.

"I HAVE NEVER FELT THAT POPULARITY AND GLAMOUR

ARE FUNDAMENTALS ON WHICH THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF THE

GOVERNMENT SHOULD OPERATE ... A MAN WHO IS INFLUENCED BY

THE POLLS OR IS AFRAID TO MAKE DECISIONS WHICH MAY MAKE HIM

UNPOPULAR IS NOT A MAN TO REPRESENT THE WELFARE OF THE

COUNTRY."

"I HAVE ALWAYS BELIEVED THAT THE VAST MAJORITY OF  
PEOPLE WANT TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT AND THAT IF THE PRESIDENT  
IS RIGHT AND CAN GET THROUGH TO THE PEOPLE HE CAN ALWAYS  
PERSUADE THEM."

PRESIDENT TRUMAN, LIKE ABRAHAM LINCOLN,  
HAD A GREAT FAITH IN THE ULTIMATE GOOD SENSE OF THE PEOPLE.  
HE LIKED THEM, HE TALKED THEIR LANGUAGE, AND IN 1948  
THEY WENT TO THE POLLS AND PROVED THAT HIS FAITH WAS  
FULLY JUSTIFIED.

I REMEMBER THAT CAMPAIGN VERY WELL, NOT BECAUSE  
GOVERNOR DEWEY WAS A NATIVE SON OF MICHIGAN, BUT BECAUSE  
IT WAS MY FIRST BID FOR ELECTIVE OFFICE•

I HAD A TOUGH PRIMARY FIGHT, AND  
PRESIDENT TRUMAN UNKNOWINGLY DID ME A FAVOR BY CALLING  
THE CONGRESS BACK IN MID-SUMMER FOR HIS FAMOUS  
'TURNIP DAY' SESSION•

THIS KEPT MY PRIMARY OPPONENT IN WASHINGTON

WHILE I WAS BUSY CAMPAIGNING AGAINST THE WHOLE

WASHINGTON ESTABLISHMENT

- WHICH HAS ALWAYS BEEN

A GOOD WAY TO GET THERE.

BUT THE REAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MY PRIMARY OPPONENT

AND ME WAS THAT HE WAS A SINCERE ISOLATIONIST AND A LEADING

OPPONENT OF THE MARSHALL PLAN AND PRESIDENT TRUMAN'S OTHER

EFFORTS TO REBUILD WARTORN EUROPE AND MAINTAIN THE

UNITED STATES' ROLE OF LEADERSHIP IN THE WORLD.

LIKE MOST OF US JUST HOME FROM WORLD WAR II,  
I WENT ALONG WITH PRESIDENT TRUMAN AND THE UNITED STATES  
SENATOR FROM MY HOMETOWN OF GRAND RAPIDS,  
ARTHUR VANDENBERG, IN SUPPORTING A STRONG BI-PARTISAN  
POSTURE IN DEFENSE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS. ~~AND~~ I WON.

AND I WENT ON SUPPORTING PRESIDENT TRUMAN  
AS A MEMBER OF THE CONGRESS ON THE GREAT ISSUES AFFECTING  
PEACE AND NATIONAL SECURITY WHICH IN THE BEST TRADITIONS OF  
OUR HISTORY OUGHT NEVER TO BE EXPLOITED OR DISTORTED FOR  
PURELY PERSONAL OR PARTISAN POLITICAL ADVANTAGE.

PRESIDENT TRUMAN NOTED IN HIS MEMOIRS THAT 1948  
WAS THE WORST POSSIBLE TIME FOR HIM TO HAVE TO WAGE A POLITICAL  
CAMPAIGN, BECAUSE HE WAS TRYING TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE RUSSIANS  
AND TRYING TO GET SOME KIND OF CEASE-FIRE IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

THERE SHOULD BE NO BREAK IN THE BI-PARTISAN  
FOREIGN POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES AT ANY TIME, HE SAID,  
PARTICULARLY DURING A NATIONAL ELECTION.

"WE ARE DANGEROUSLY CLOSE TO FORGETTING TODAY,"

HE WROTE LATER, 'THAT IT IS THE PRESIDENT'S DUTY TO LEAD THE

NATION IN THE CONDUCT OF ITS FOREIGN AFFAIRS. THIS IS

A RESPONSIBILITY THAT CANNOT BE DELEGATED AND MUST NOT BE

AVOIDED."

MR. TRUMAN WAS MUCH TOO SEASONED A CAMPAIGNER

AND MUCH TOO REALISTIC ABOUT THE TWO-PARTY SYSTEM TO SUPPOSE

THAT FOREIGN AFFAIRS WOULD - OR EVEN SHOULD -- BE

A FORBIDDEN SUBJECT IN POLITICAL DEBATE. THAT IS NOT

WHAT HE SAID.



WHAT HE SAID WAS THAT AMERICAN POLICY SHOULD

NOT BE DEMAGOGUED, DAMAGED OR DERAILED BECAUSE OF ELECTION

YEAR CONSIDERATIONS.

I AGREED THEN AND NOW I KNOW

HOW RIGHT HE WAS.

AND I AM GOING TO FOLLOW HIS COUNSEL

AND HIS EXAMPLE.

NOBODY EXPECTS CONSENSUS OR CONFORMITY

IN A DEMOCRACY BUT IT IS NOT TOO MUCH TO EXPECT OF A MATURE

200-YEAR OLD NATION THAT ITS FREE POLITICAL DEBATES BE CONDUCTED

RESPONSIBLY AND RATIONALLY IN THE SENSITIVE AREAS OF

NATIONAL SECURITY AND OUR RELATIONS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES.

WE KNOW THAT BOTH FRIENDS AND FOES ARE WATCHING

OUR ELECTION PROCESS CLOSELY AND LISTENING TO EVERY WORD

WE SAY THAT MIGHT AFFECT THEM IN THE FUTURE.

THROUGHOUT HIS EVENTFUL YEARS AS PRESIDENT,

AND AFTER HE LEFT OFFICE, MR. TRUMAN REPEATEDLY SAID THAT

THE PRIMARY GOAL OF ALL HIS EFFORTS WAS PEACE.

HE HAD LEARNED ABOUT WAR FIRST-HAND

AS CAPTAIN OF BATTERY "D" IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR.

AS COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HE MADE SOME OF THE MOST DIFFICULT

DECISIONS OF WORLD WAR II AND KOREA.

HE WAS ACUTELY AWARE THAT WORLD PEACE CAN ONLY

BE SECURED THROUGH AMERICAN STRENGTH AND THE CLOSEST TIES

WITH OUR ALLIES.

HE HAD NO ILLUSIONS ABOUT OUR ADVERSARIES

BUT BELIEVED, NEVERTHELESS, THAT "NO DOOR SHOULD BE CLOSED

EVEN TO THE REMOTEST CHANCE IN PURSUIT OF PEACE."

I WAS JUST BACK FROM CARRIER DUTY IN THE PACIFIC

ON APRIL 12, 1945, THE DAY VICE PRESIDENT TRUMAN WAS

SUDDENLY CALLED UPON TO ASSUME THE PRESIDENCY OF THE

UNITED STATES.

ON THE EVENING OF AUGUST 9, 1974, AFTER THE SAME  
THING HAPPENED TO ME, I WAS WALKING THROUGH THE WEST WING  
OF THE WHITE HOUSE, AND I REMEMBERED MY FIRST VISIT THERE  
AND HOW EASILY PRESIDENT TRUMAN MADE A FRESHMAN CONGRESSMAN  
FEEL AT HOME - AND GOT HIS 5.4 MILLION DOLLARS.

ONE OF MY LONGTIME ASSOCIATES REMINDED ME  
THAT ONE OF THE FIRST THINGS A NEW PRESIDENT USUALLY DOES  
IS CHOOSE WHICH THREE PORTRAITS OF PAST PRESIDENTS SHOULD  
HANG IN THE CABINET ROOM.

"WE'LL LEAVE PRESIDENT EISENHOWER RIGHT WHERE HE IS,"

I SAID. AND OF COURSE I WANT TO HAVE ABRAHAM LINCOLN."

'TO BALANCE IT OFF,' HE SUGGESTED, 'HOW ABOUT

ANDY JACKSON?'"

"NO, HARRY TRUMAN," I SAID.

"ARE YOU ABSOLUTELY SURE?" HE ASKED.

'THAT'S MY DECISION,' I SAID. 'HE KNEW WHERE

THE BUCK STOPS AND HE WAS NEVER AFRAID OF THE HEAT IN THE

KITCHEN."

END OF TEXT