

REMARKS BY SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

UNVEILING OF STATUE OF PRESIDENT HARRY S. TRUMAN

Truman Library

Independence, Missouri

May 8, 1976

More than anything else, the courage of Harry Truman has meaning for America today.

Now, as then, we confront difficult issues and fateful choices. Lacking courage, no matter what other virtues we possess, we are likely to falter under the pressure of future events.

Most of Harry Truman's historic achievements were grounded in courage, and from it came both the affection and the respect in which he was so widely held.

Basically, Harry Truman demonstrated three kinds of courage: The courage of the activist; the courage of the decision-maker; and the courage of the common man.

The courage of the activist: Harry Truman had it. There were other voices in his day, just as there are in ours -- voices of pessimism and retreat. But Harry Truman was always an optimist and an activist -- confident in the basic goodness and strength of America.

In 1948 the polls told him that he would lose. Disaffection in the country and within his own political party made his prospects uncertain. There was really no further prize for him to win save that of his own inner consciousness that he had not turned away from his duty. Out of his courage in devotion to duty, Harry Truman actively carried on and achieved victory.

Time and again Truman was tested: and time and again his keen sense of who he was and what the country needed led him to act, not react; to seize the present opportunity, and not to wait until it had passed.

By nature, Truman was impatient with high flown rhetoric. He hated evasions and ambiguous phrases that could mean anything to anybody. He scorned code words. His purposes were clear and his words direct. He said what he meant and meant what he said. Truman believed that in the beginning was the deed. Being an activist, he did his best to translate principles into practice.

This had nothing to do with what the public relations people call "image building" through "media opportunities" -- although he did build an image, and, what is more, a credible one. Instead, it had to do with policy -- the active pursuit of difficult policies, often bitterly opposed.

It was Harry Truman the activist who in 1945 proposed a Full Employment Act, an act that for the first time in American history would declare it the responsibility of government to see to it that every American willing and able to work would have a job.

It was Harry Truman the activist who brought out into the open an unhappy truth that had secretly shamed us for generations -- that although our Declaration of Independence had said that all men are created equal, and that although we had freed the slaves in the Civil War, we still treated black Americans as second-class citizens. It was Harry Truman who proposed a program of reforms to right that wrong.

It was Harry Truman the activist who had the foresight to lay before the Congress a program of expanded medical care so that the poor as well as the rich could afford health services.

In all these fields we still have far to go before Harry Truman's vision will be realized -- jobs for all, equal justice for all, and high quality medical care for all. It is an unfinished agenda. But these goals will be reached by actively pursuing them, not by passively retreating from them. The courage of activism remains as essential today as it was in Truman's time.

The courage of the decision-maker: Even those who disagreed with his policies admired his courage. Truman stood up well. He was bold, resolute, and committed. His was the desk where the buck stopped.

He fought the good fight. He became so identified with his chosen issues that he constantly took political risks that few Presidents have been willing to take.

He never hesitated to stand up and be counted.

The record of the Truman years was truly a Truman record, no matter what else, because the man from Independence had the courage to decide.

His vision of the future was not one of haphazard occurrences, but of determined constructive attempts to reach human goals. Harry Truman had convictions, and, even more important, the courage to convert those convictions into decisions. Moreover, once his decisions were made, he stuck by them.

"If you can't stand the heat," he said, "stay out of the kitchen." And his kitchen was Washington, D.C. As far as he was concerned, that's where the big action was, that's where the big decisions had to be taken, and that's where the people needed to be represented -- inside the White House itself.

The courage of the decision-maker. That courage was tested repeatedly in the big affirmative decisions of the Truman Administration:

- in the statecraft that went into the construction of the United Nations, committing a once-isolationist America to an active, international role;
- in dedicating American policy to the principle of collective security against aggression, whether in the founding of NATO in Europe or in responding to the North Korean attack in Asia;
- in sponsoring innovative policies like the Marshall Plan to rescue and rebuild the war-ravaged economies of Europe, and like Point 4, the pioneering effort at technical assistance for the developing world;
- in his dramatic decision to recognize the infant state of Israel within eleven minutes of its birth.

Harry Truman had the courage of the decision-maker, not only when it came to affirmative decisions of his own making, but in holding firm, at great personal political cost, when important principles were under fire:

- in asserting civilian control of the military when General MacArthur tried to pursue his own strategy over the head of his Commander-in-Chief;
- in supporting to the hilt his beleaguered Secretary of State when he came under savage assault by the demagogic Senator Joe McCarthy.

The courage of the decision-maker combined with the courage of the activist, produced the Truman record in office.

Finally, Harry Truman brought with him to the White House, and never lost while he was in the White House, the courage of the common man.

More than any President since Lincoln, Harry Truman really loved people. He never lost his common sense or his common touch. He deliberately stood for the human side of the economic and social issues of his day. Because of his lifelong faith in the American People, he gave people hope, confidence, and self-respect. He made democracy a living reality.

It is not always easy to be -- or to remain -- a common man in the White House. But the Truman Presidency was the least "Imperial Presidency" of the last half century.

Each of us has his own favorite memories to prove that point. I especially remember the day that he took my mother and father through the White House.

In the same year that Harry Truman surprised many people by being elected President, I was first elected the junior Senator from Minnesota, which was also a surprise to many people. After Muriel and I settled down to our new life in Washington, my parents came to visit us.

I built up my courage -- after all, I was only a freshman Senator -- and I called President Truman's appointments secretary and asked if I could bring my parents over to the White House.

Once we were inside the President's office, my mother told Mr. Truman that she was scared to death to be there. He gave her a hug and said: "Oh, we're just folks here." The senior Humphreys quickly found themselves being escorted on a personal tour of the White House by the President himself.

My father was a sincere, direct, patriotic, humane Midwesterner, and so was the man from Missouri.

It took courage for that common man from the "Show Me" state, to do so many uncommon things. And he was helped in so doing, at each point along the way, by the steadfastness and devotion of his wonderful wife, Bess, and his charming daughter, Margaret. Harry Truman loved his family and that love and devotion gave strength to all Americans.

Just as the American people came to love Harry Truman, Harry Truman loved this country. Through the eloquence of action he made us feel better about ourselves. Perhaps after all this is true patriotism. It was most certainly true leadership. And it reflected true courage.

The courage of the activist, the courage of the decision-maker, and the courage of the common man: Harry Truman had them all in abundance at the right time, in the right place. There is no better remedy for our nation's ills than for the prompt rediscovery of those virtues today.

President Harry S. Truman spoke to the best that was in us, and gave us the best that was in him. History will always do him honor. But more important, those of us who knew him, and loved and admired him, bear a direct responsibility to build upon his legacy -- a rich legacy of giving hope and opportunity to all the people, of standing firm for what we know is right, and of accepting the risk of progressive leadership in building a better world for generations to come.

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INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI

MAY 8, 1976

- Mr President - Mrs Ford
- Margaret Truman Daniel + family (Clifton)
- Sen Byrdington
- Sen Eagleton
- Governor Bond
- Mayor Kang

✓ MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE, THE COURAGE OF HARRY TRUMAN HAS MEANING
FOR AMERICA TODAY.

~~✓ NOW, AS THEN, WE CONFRONT DIFFICULT ISSUES AND FATEFUL CHOICES,~~

✓ LACKING COURAGE, NO MATTER WHAT OTHER VIRTUES WE POSSESS, WE ARE
LIKELY TO FALTER UNDER THE PRESSURE OF FUTURE EVENTS.

✓ ~~MOST OF HARRY TRUMAN'S HISTORIC ACHIEVEMENTS WERE GROUNDED IN
COURAGE, AND FROM IT CAME BOTH THE AFFECTION AND THE RESPECT IN WHICH
HE WAS SO WIDELY HELD.~~

~~BASICALLY~~ ✓ HARRY TRUMAN DEMONSTRATED THREE KINDS OF COURAGE:
the man of action
THE COURAGE OF THE ACTIVIST; THE COURAGE OF THE DECISION-MAKER; AND
THE COURAGE OF THE COMMON MAN,

THE COURAGE OF THE ACTIVIST: HARRY TRUMAN HAD IT. THERE WERE
OTHER VOICES IN HIS DAY, JUST AS THERE ARE IN OURS -- VOICES OF
PESSIMISM AND RETREAT. BUT HARRY TRUMAN WAS ALWAYS AN OPTIMIST AND
AN ACTIVIST -- CONFIDENT IN THE BASIC GOODNESS AND STRENGTH OF *the*
AMERICAN people.

L IN 1948 THE POLLS TOLD HIM THAT HE WOULD LOSE, DISAFFECTION IN
THE COUNTRY AND WITHIN HIS OWN POLITICAL PARTY MADE HIS PROSPECTS
UNCERTAIN. ~~THERE WAS REALLY NO FURTHER PRIZE FOR HIM TO WIN SAVE~~
~~THAT OF HIS OWN INNER CONSCIOUSNESS THAT HE HAD NOT TURNED AWAY FROM~~
~~HIS DUTY.~~ OUT OF HIS COURAGE *and* DEVOTION TO DUTY, HARRY TRUMAN
met the challenge
ACTIVELY CARRIED ON AND ACHIEVED VICTORY.

L TIME AND AGAIN TRUMAN WAS TESTED; AND TIME AND AGAIN HIS KEEN
SENSE OF WHO HE WAS AND WHAT THE COUNTRY NEEDED LED HIM TO ACT, NOT
REACT; TO SEIZE THE PRESENT OPPORTUNITY, AND NOT TO WAIT UNTIL IT HAD
PASSED.

~~By nature~~ ^{Harry} TRUMAN WAS IMPATIENT WITH HIGH FLOWN RHETORIC, ~~HE~~
~~He hated doubletalk - and evasive~~
~~HATED EVASIONS AND AMBIGUOUS PHRASES THAT COULD MEAN ANYTHING TO~~
~~phrases.~~

~~ANYBODY.~~ ~~HE SCORNE~~ ~~D CODE WORDS.~~ HIS PURPOSES WERE CLEAR AND HIS

WORDS DIRECT ~~He~~ HE SAID WHAT HE MEANT AND MEANT WHAT HE SAID. ~~TRUMAN~~

BELIEVED THAT IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE DEED. ~~Being an activist~~ ^{a man of action} HE

DID HIS BEST TO TRANSLATE PRINCIPLES INTO PRACTICE.

THIS HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH WHAT THE PUBLIC RELATIONS PEOPLE
CALL "IMAGE BUILDING" THROUGH "MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES" -- ALTHOUGH HE
DID BUILD AN IMAGE, AND, WHAT IS MORE, A CREDIBLE ONE. INSTEAD, IT
HAD TO DO WITH POLICY -- THE ACTIVE PURSUIT OF DIFFICULT POLICIES,
OFTEN BITTERLY OPPOSED.

the many Action
IT WAS HARRY TRUMAN ~~THE ACTIVIST~~ WHO IN 1945 PROPOSED A FULL
EMPLOYMENT ACT, AN ACT THAT ~~FOR THE FIRST TIME IN AMERICAN HISTORY~~
declared
~~WOULD DECLARE~~ IT THE RESPONSIBILITY OF GOVERNMENT TO SEE TO IT THAT

EVERY AMERICAN WILLING AND ABLE TO WORK WOULD HAVE A JOB.

L IT WAS HARRY TRUMAN ~~THE ACTIVIST~~ WHO BROUGHT OUT INTO THE OPEN AN
UNHAPPY TRUTH THAT HAD SECRETLY SHAMED US FOR GENERATIONS -- THAT
ALTHOUGH OUR DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE ~~HAD~~ SAID THAT ALL MEN ARE
CREATED EQUAL, ~~AND THAT ALTHOUGH WE HAD FREED THE SLAVES IN THE CIVIL~~
~~WAR~~ WE STILL TREATED BLACK AMERICANS AS SECOND-CLASS CITIZENS. *L* IT

garland
~~advocated a~~
WAS HARRY TRUMAN WHO PROPOSED A PROGRAM OF REFORMS TO RIGHT THAT WRONG
full program of civil rights for all Americans
L IT WAS HARRY TRUMAN ~~THE ACTIVIST~~ WHO HAD THE FORESIGHT TO LAY
comprehensive
BEFORE THE CONGRESS A PROGRAM OF ~~EXPANDED~~ MEDICAL CARE SO THAT THE

the elderly as well as the young
POOR AS WELL AS THE RICH ~~COULD AFFORD HEALTH SERVICES,~~
could ~~would~~ have health care.

yet

IN ALL THESE FIELDS WE STILL HAVE FAR TO GO BEFORE HARRY TRUMAN'S

VISION WILL BE REALIZED -- JOBS FOR ALL, EQUAL JUSTICE FOR ALL, AND

HIGH QUALITY MEDICAL CARE FOR ALL / IT IS AN UNFINISHED AGENDA. ~~221~~

THESE GOALS WILL BE REACHED BY ACTIVELY PURSUING THEM, NOT BY

PASSIVELY RETREATING FROM THEM. ~~THE COURAGE OF ACTIVISM REMAINS AS~~

~~ESSENTIAL TODAY AS IT WAS IN TRUMAN'S TIME.~~

~~When we all have Truman~~

#2 / THE COURAGE OF THE DECISION-MAKER: EVEN THOSE WHO DISAGREED WITH

HIS POLICIES ADMIRER HIS COURAGE / TRUMAN STOOD UP WELL. / HE WAS BOLD,

RESOLUTE, AND COMMITTED. / HIS WAS THE DESK WHERE THE BUCK STOPPED.

HE FOUGHT THE GOOD FIGHT. / HE BECAME SO IDENTIFIED WITH HIS
CHOSEN ISSUES THAT HE CONSTANTLY TOOK POLITICAL RISKS THAT FEW
PRESIDENTS HAVE BEEN WILLING TO TAKE.

He ~~had~~ NEVER HESITATED TO STAND UP AND BE COUNTED.

~~THE RECORD OF THE TRUMAN YEARS WAS TRULY A TRUMAN RECORD, NO
MATTER WHAT ELSE, BECAUSE THE MAN FROM INDEPENDENCE HAD THE COURAGE
TO DECIDE~~

HIS VISION OF THE FUTURE WAS NOT ONE OF HAPHAZARD OCCURRENCES,
BUT OF DETERMINED CONSTRUCTIVE ~~effort~~ ATTEMPTS TO REACH HUMAN GOALS. ~~THE~~ HARRY

TRUMAN HAD CONVICTIONS, AND, EVEN MORE IMPORTANT, THE COURAGE TO

CONVERT THOSE CONVICTIONS INTO DECISIONS. ~~MOREOVER~~ ^{and} ONCE HIS

DECISIONS WERE MADE, HE STUCK BY THEM.!

L "IF YOU CAN'T STAND THE HEAT," HE SAID, "STAY OUT OF THE
KITCHEN." AND ^{Harry Truman's} ~~HIS~~ KITCHEN WAS WASHINGTON, D.C. L AS FAR AS HE WAS
CONCERNED, THAT'S WHERE THE BIG ACTION WAS, THAT'S WHERE THE BIG
DECISIONS HAD TO BE TAKEN, AND THAT'S WHERE THE PEOPLE NEEDED TO BE
REPRESENTED -- INSIDE THE WHITE HOUSE ITSELF.

L THE COURAGE OF THE DECISION-MAKER. L THAT COURAGE WAS TESTED
REPEATEDLY IN THE ^{historic} ~~big~~ ~~affirmative~~ DECISIONS OF THE TRUMAN

ADMINISTRATION:

-- ^{the creation of the} ~~IN THE STATECRAFT THAT WENT INTO THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE~~
UNITED NATIONS, COMMITTING A ONCE-ISOLATIONIST AMERICA TO AN ACTIVE,
INTERNATIONAL ROLE;

-- ~~IN~~ DEDICATING AMERICAN POLICY TO THE PRINCIPLE OF COLLECTIVE
SECURITY AGAINST AGGRESSION, WHETHER IN THE FOUNDING OF NATO
IN EUROPE OR IN RESPONDING TO THE NORTH KOREAN ATTACK IN ASIA:

- The Berlin Airlift in defiance
of Communist obstruction.

-- ~~IN SPONSORING INNOVATIVE POLICIES LIKE THE~~ MARSHALL PLAN TO

RESCUE AND REBUILD THE WAR-RAVAGED ECONOMIES OF EUROPE, *The*
program - a
~~LIKE~~ POINT 4 *economic and* THE PIONEERING EFFORT AT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR
THE DEVELOPING WORLD;

-- ~~ON~~ HIS DRAMATIC DECISION TO RECOGNIZE THE INFANT STATE OF

ISRAEL WITHIN ELEVEN MINUTES OF ITS BIRTH. - *These and*

many more decisions of courage.

L HARRY TRUMAN HAD THE COURAGE OF THE DECISION-MAKER, NOT ONLY WHEN

IT CAME TO AFFIRMATIVE DECISIONS OF HIS OWN MAKING, BUT IN HOLDING FIRM

AT GREAT PERSONAL POLITICAL COST, WHEN IMPORTANT *Constitutional* PRINCIPLES WERE UNDER

attack - -

-- ~~ON~~ ASSERTING CIVILIAN CONTROL OF THE MILITARY WHEN GENERAL

MACARTHUR TRIED TO PURSUE HIS OWN STRATEGY OVER THE HEAD OF

HIS COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF;

-- ~~IN~~ SUPPORTING TO THE HILT HIS BELEAGUERED SECRETARY OF STATE

WHEN HE CAME UNDER SAVAGE ASSAULT BY THE DEMAGOGIC SENATOR

JOE MCCARTHY,

THE COURAGE OF THE DECISION-MAKER COMBINED WITH THE COURAGE OF THE
ACTIVIST, PRODUCED THE TRUMAN RECORD IN ~~the~~ the Presidency.

(3) FINALLY, HARRY TRUMAN BROUGHT WITH HIM TO THE WHITE HOUSE, AND

NEVER LOST WHILE HE WAS IN THE WHITE HOUSE, THE COURAGE OF THE COMMON

MAN the Citizen President

MORE THAN ANY PRESIDENT SINCE LINCOLN, HARRY TRUMAN REALLY
LOVED PEOPLE. HE NEVER LOST HIS COMMON SENSE OR HIS COMMON TOUCH.

He DELIBERATELY STOOD FOR THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
ISSUES OF HIS DAY. BECAUSE OF HIS LIFELONG FAITH IN THE AMERICAN
PEOPLE, HE GAVE PEOPLE HOPE, CONFIDENCE, AND SELF-RESPECT. HE MADE
DEMOCRACY A LIVING REALITY.

There was no pretense - no Propriety.

~~IT IS NOT ALWAYS EASY TO BE -- OR TO REMAIN -- A COMMON MAN IN~~
~~THE WHITE HOUSE.~~ BUT *the Citizen* THE TRUMAN PRESIDENCY WAS ~~THE LEAST "IMPERIAL~~
~~PRESIDENCY"~~ *never the Imperial Presidency* OF THE LAST HALF CENTURY.

EACH OF US HAS HIS OWN FAVORITE MEMORIES TO PROVE THAT POINT.

I ESPECIALLY REMEMBER THE DAY THAT HE TOOK MY MOTHER AND FATHER
THROUGH THE WHITE HOUSE.

could come out
IN THE SAME YEAR THAT HARRY TRUMAN SURPRISED MANY PEOPLE BY
BEING ELECTED PRESIDENT, I WAS FIRST ELECTED THE JUNIOR SENATOR

FROM MINNESOTA, WHICH WAS ALSO A SURPRISE TO MANY PEOPLE. AFTER

MURIEL AND I SETTLED DOWN TO OUR NEW LIFE IN WASHINGTON, MY PARENTS
CAME TO VISIT US.

I BUILT UP MY COURAGE -- AFTER ALL, I WAS ONLY A FRESHMAN
SENATOR -- AND ~~4~~ CALLED PRESIDENT TRUMAN'S APPOINTMENTS SECRETARY
AND ASKED IF I COULD ~~D~~ BRING MY PARENTS OVER TO THE WHITE HOUSE.

L ONCE WE WERE INSIDE THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE, MY MOTHER TOLD
MR. TRUMAN THAT SHE WAS SCARED TO DEATH TO BE THERE. ~~He~~ *patches*

arm around her and said -
A HUG AND SAID: "OH, WE'RE JUST FOLKS HERE." ~~[THE SENIOR HUMPHREYS~~

~~QUICKLY FOUND THEMSELVES BEING ESCORTED ON A PERSONAL TOUR OF THE~~
~~WHITE HOUSE BY THE PRESIDENT HIMSELF.~~

~~MY FATHER WAS A SINCERE, DIRECT, PATRIOTIC, HUMANE MIDWESTERNER,~~
~~AND SO WAS THE MAN FROM MISSOURI.~~

the citizen President

IT TOOK COURAGE FOR THAT "COMMON MAN" FROM THE "SHOW ME" STATE,
TO DO SO MANY UNCOMMON THINGS AND HE WAS HELPED IN SO DOING, AT
EACH POINT ALONG THE WAY, BY THE STEADFASTNESS AND DEVOTION OF HIS
WONDERFUL WIFE, BESS, AND HIS CHARMING DAUGHTER, MARGARET. HARRY
TRUMAN LOVED HIS FAMILY AND THAT LOVE AND DEVOTION GAVE STRENGTH TO
ALL AMERICANS.

~~##~~

↳ JUST AS THE AMERICAN PEOPLE CAME TO LOVE HARRY TRUMAN, ^{TRUMAN} HARRY TRUMAN
LOVED THIS COUNTRY. THROUGH THE ELOQUENCE OF ACTION HE MADE US FEEL
BETTER ABOUT OURSELVES. PERHAPS AFTER ALL, THIS IS TRUE PATRIOTISM.
IT WAS MOST CERTAINLY TRUE LEADERSHIP. AND IT REFLECTED TRUE COURAGE.

man of Action,
L THE COURAGE OF THE ~~ACTIVIST~~, THE COURAGE OF THE DECISION-MAKER,

AND THE COURAGE OF THE COMMON MAN! HARRY TRUMAN HAD THEM ALL IN

ABUNDANCE AT THE RIGHT TIME, IN THE RIGHT PLACE. THERE IS NO BETTER

REMEDY FOR OUR NATION'S ILLS THAN FOR THE PROMPT REDISCOVERY OF THOSE

VIRTUES TODAY.

L PRESIDENT HARRY S. TRUMAN SPOKE TO THE BEST THAT WAS IN US,

AND GAVE US THE BEST THAT WAS IN HIM. HISTORY WILL ALWAYS DO HIM

HONOR. BUT MORE IMPORTANT, THOSE OF US WHO KNEW HIM, AND LOVED AND

ADMIRER HIM, BEAR A DIRECT RESPONSIBILITY TO BUILD UPON HIS LEGACY --

A RICH LEGACY OF GIVING HOPE AND OPPORTUNITY TO ALL THE PEOPLE,

OF STANDING FIRM FOR WHAT WE KNOW IS RIGHT, AND OF ACCEPTING THE RISK

OF PROGRESSIVE LEADERSHIP IN BUILDING A BETTER WORLD FOR GENERATIONS

TO COME.

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