

Editorial Comment—

A Great Man Passes

"Is there anything we can do for you, for you are the one in trouble now."

The above historic uttering was spoken by the late Eleanor Roosevelt, the wife of the late President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Her husband had just died and she had summoned Vice President Harry S. Truman to the White House and told him that the President had died. She uttered the above words when Truman asked, "Is there anything I can do for you?"

At that moment, massive and infinitely complex problems fell on the shoulders of Harry Truman, a simple plain speaking man who seemed like a sorely under-equipped man to take on the man-killing burdens. The great World War II in Europe had just been over. The war with Japan was still going on — and there was Harry Truman. He succeeded the sophisticated, knowledgeable President Roosevelt. Those were terribly big shoes to fill.

This editor was in Elouina Air Base near Tunis, Tunisia as a radio operator when the news of the death of President Roosevelt came through. He, along with legions, was stunned. When we heard the first formal speech of the new President Harry Truman, we were not impressed. He didn't seem like a good speaker, nothing like Roosevelt. He slipped over words and we said, "Who in the hell is he?"

We had this feeling for some time but then, scarcely more than three months, there was a change in the man. He seemed to have taken a tight grip on the reins and generated a new feeling among the Air Force radio personnel. We soon knew that we had a real boss back in Washington.

President Truman learned the workings of his office in amazingly short time. What made this remarkable was that a vice president in those days was one of the least informed in the officialdom of the United States government. When he was sworn in as President, he didn't even know about the process of development of the atomic bomb. This device was to figure greatly during his tenure in not too long a period since becoming the head of the nation.

Awesome decisions were in the offing for the new President. He implemented the Marshall Plan that expedited the recovery from the destructive World War II in Europe. He made the heart-searching decision of using the massively destructive device — the atomic bomb — that razed the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan. This action ended the war in Japan. He fired the highly thought of General of the Army Douglas MacArthur who at the time commanded the Army against Japan. There were many other decisive actions Harry Truman made. He also won over Thomas Dewey when many thought he didn't win.

But one of the greatest qualities the man from Missouri had was his humanness. He was blunt. He protected the honor of his family. He amused people by playing his piano. But above all, he was a common man's President. He fought to better their lot. Common people recognized this quality and encouraged him by shouting, "Give 'em hell, Harry."

Harry Truman stands to be one of the greatest presidents his nation ever had. His was an awesome period of upheaval which he met with great courage. He truly fulfilled his own saying, "If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen."