

Native Leaders' Reaction to Truman's Death

Harry Truman was very much the common man's president. And he was admired for it by many people, including Alaskans. His death last Tuesday brought a wave of responses from Native and other leaders around the state.

"What I saw was . . . a common man with uncommon qualities," said John Borbridge, president of the Tlingit-Haida Central Council for the Tlingit-Haida Indians of Alaska. "He made his decision based on his assessments and never looked back. I have always admired him because he came into the White House quietly and underestimated," but still made his influence felt on policy, concluded Borbridge.

Emil Notti, president of the Alaska Federation of Natives Foundation, said "History is already showing him to be one of the great presidents we have had. When he was president, he was very interested in American Indians and the civil rights problems they had. It is a sad day for the nation that the former president has died."

Eben Ho, son, mayor of the Arctic Slope Borough, also called Truman "one of our greatest presidents, particularly after he picked up the unexpired

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third term of Roosevelt.

He called for former president "one of the people you might refer to as a very common man who was ready to take on any problem at a moment's notice.

"Mr. Truman, if he were like any other senator in Washington, D.C., Roosevelt would not have picked him to replace Henry Wallace and be the vice president. He was a common man who made good," Hopson concluded.

"An outstanding American and world leader" was Gov. William A. Egan's description of Truman. He added, "We Alaskans truly have a personal recollection of the vision of this great man because he was the first President of the United States to endorse statehood for Alaska."

Truman initiated the Alaska Public Works Program for the then Territory of Alaska, bringing to the area schools and other needs. For this, as well as for other assistance he gave the state, Egan praised him.

Lt. Gov. H. A. "Red" Boucher said "He was probably the president who most represented average, mainstream America. He will go down in history as one of the men who met the challenge of the office."

"He had some very hard decisions to make while president, and he did not hesitate to make them," said State Sen.-elect Keith Miller, former governor of Alaska. "Americans will miss a great man."

Former Gov. Walter J. Hickel, who met the former president while in Washington, D.C. lobbying for Alaskan statehood, said, "President Truman was one of the most basic, straightforward men I've ever met. That earthy quality gave him his strength in the presidency."