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Mr. President, 1952.

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"MR. PRESIDENT"

May 18, 1952

My dear friends: The office of the Presidency of the United States is the most important office in the world today. The President of the United States is head, not a figure-head, but head of the richest and most powerful country on earth. The Chief Executive of a government which directs the political and the economic and the social forces of more than 150 millions of people, and which because of its influence on the international scene, affects the fortunes of many hundreds of millions more of human beings.

While the President possesses no absolute power, as does a dictator, he possesses nevertheless tremendous power, far greater than any king or prime minister in any constitutional government on earth. Therefore, anyone who occupies this very important office is by virtue of this very occupancy a very important person, regardless of whether intrinsically he is a great man or not. And whatever is said by him and whatever sheds light on him or serves to reveal or interpret him is of importance.

Mr. Truman is today the President of the United States, the 32nd or the 33rd to occupy that exalted office. He has been President since the death of President Roosevelt and he will remain in his present office at least until January 1953.

Now, great historic events at home and abroad have taken place during his administration and he played a key role in these events. The close of his administration may witness equally important events. Anything, therefore, which Mr. Truman chooses to say about himself, about his beliefs, his plans, his estimate of the present situation, his outlook for the future - anything which he chooses to reveal holds great interest not only for the American people, but for the whole world.

Not many Presidents have chosen during their term of office - or for that matter, even after their term of office - to speak so frankly and so freely and with such little inhibition about themselves as Mr. Truman does in this recent book called "Mr. President", which his friend, William Hillman, the White House correspondent of the

Mutual Broadcasting System, has written about him. This book, "Mr. President", is neither biography nor autobiography, but it is a sort of a guided tour, if you will, not through the White House, but through the man who occupies the White House. Looking into this book is like looking into a family album, or better still, like turning the pages of a scrap book, the scrap book of the President of the United States. Mr. Truman made available to Mr. Hillman, the author of this book, his diaries, letters, private papers, many notes which he himself wrote for his own personal files, and gave him a series of interviews, and out of these Mr. Hillman has constructed this book, three-fourths of which is in Mr. Truman's own words. Of course, many private papers could not be used, could not be made available to Mr. Hillman for state reasons or security reasons or other reasons, and the diaries he used are limited to the end of 1949, but enough is brought together here to illumine and sharply to delineate not an involved personality, not a complex personality, but to use Mr. Hillman's own words, "a man of simple tastes and fierce convictions and opinions and old-fashioned sentiments and forward-looking social liberalism". This man, therefore, whose hand has been on the rudder of the ship of state of our country in one of the most turbulent and critical times in human history.

This handsome volume is profusely illustrated with many pictures, some of them full page and some of them in full color. It's an attractive volume. And the impression of the scrap book or the family album is heightened by the numerous photographs in the volume not alone of the President, of his family, of his forebears, of the entire "meshpoka", but also many photographs of public buildings in Washington, statues and of public documents, and also of his friends, members of his Cabinet, great Americans of the past, and also such figures in one way or another related to Mr. Truman like Moses and Alexander, the Great, and Julius Ceasar and Henry IV of France and Shakespeare and Mark Twain. They are all introduced to you as you read this book almost physically, and the reader's imagination and his recollection from his school days are not over-taxed.

Now, this book is not a controversial book, and for that matter, it is not an apologetic book; except in its broad outlines, it is not a defense of Mr. Truman's policies or of any specific legislation which he advocated. It is a volume singularly free from attack. The book~~xx~~ is not used to pay off any scores or to settle any accounts with his political enemies. Here and there the President does try to set the record straight, as he sees it, or to tell his side of the story on events which had created at the time considerable public discussion or heated controversy in the press; for example, his break with Secretary of State Byrnes or his break with Mr. Bernard M. Baruch and that famous sizzling letter which he wrote to the music critic of his daughter's singing, or his connections with Tom Pendergast and his organization. But otherwise the book is written in a very friendly mood, neither to attack nor to defend. There is really no new information in or, no revelations, but the President does make a forthright effort to be understood by his fellow-citizens. He feels that his motives have all along been right and honorable; he feels that he has faithfully discharged the duties of his high office; that he has carried out the people's mandate. All that he wanted was, to use his words, "peace in the world and a fair deal for every part of the population of this great nation." He would like us to realize that the office of the President of the United States is a terribly difficult office and that the man who occupies it is a terribly lonely person and one very heavily burdened. And, therefore, in stepping out of office (for this book, I suspect, is in the nature of a valedictory) - in stepping out of office, he would like to carry away with him the affection of his fellow citizens, of his fellowmen.

And I believe that to a large extent he succeeds, whether one agrees with his politics or not, whether one believes that he has carried out successfully any or all of the things which he has attempted to do, one leaves the book with a feeling that here is a man who cannot be hated, here is a man that has many fine, laudable qualities. Mr. Truman is not a man of great personal charm, like his distinguished predecessor in office, but the very simplicity of the man, his uncomplicated nature, his

modesty, lack of pretense - the homespun quality of his shrewd and sentimental Americanism. These make their own appeal and they make a very strong appeal.

Mr. Truman emerges from this book a man what you might call, in the American tradition - religious, devoted to his family, loyal to his friend, self-educated, self-reliant and very humane. Somewhere in the book he said, "I wish I were a scholar," and this is a key to the man's essential humility and lack of pretense.

"I missed being a musician" he writes somewhere in the book, "and the real and only reason I missed being one is because I wasn't good enough." His life did not afford him the opportunity to go to college and many Presidents of the United States never went to college, including the greatest of them, but it did not deny him the opportunity of a challenge to read avidly, to keep an open mind, to seek and acquire much useful information on many subjects. The book reveals, for example, that Mr. Truman has been practically throughout his life a very eager student of history - he knows history, he reads history. He is not ashamed of his inadequacies. He frankly acknowledges them and has tried throughout his life to surmount them to the best of his ability. To one of his friends he wrote, "I don't think there is anybody in the country who had as rotten a delivery over the radio as I did to begin with, but thanks to good friends like you, who have been honestly helpful in their criticism, I think there has been some improvement."

Now, I think that's admirable. I wish many more public speakers had the same feeling about themselves. Somewhere else in the book there is a note of his - and he was very fond of making notes to himself and filing them away - referring to some important address which he had made, "Well, the speech seems to have made a hit, according to all the papers. Shows you can never tell. I thought it was rotten."

Mr. Truman is a deeply religious man. A few times through the book he is quoted as having said that he read the Bible through twice before he was 12 years old.

The President's knowledge of the Bible and Biblical stories is as rich in detail and in observation as that of politics and military things. Even in this field the President finds men who are not properly appreciated.

"Take Amos," says the President. "He is one of the minor prophets and he is not often talked or preached about. There are only nine chapters in the Bible on Amos, but Amos says as much in those few chapters as Isaiah did in sixty-six chapters. Amos was interested in the welfare of the average man. That is what the prophets were, they were the protagonists of the common man, and that is the reason they survived, and for no other reason. Every one of these prophets were trying to help the underdog and the greatest prophet was crucified because he was trying to help the underdog."

Mr. Hillman says:

I asked him what other passages in the Bible he liked, and he said:

"I think some of the passages in Jeremiah and Daniel are wonderful. I like the Proverbs and the Psalms - the 137th Psalm, 'By the rivers of Babylon', of course, is the famous one, and the 96th, 'O, sing unto the Lord a new song.' They are wonderful, they are just like poetry. And read the passages in Deuteronomy that are seldom referred to. The Ten Commandments are repeated in Deuteronomy in sonorous language that really makes a tingle go down your spine to read them."

And underneath a photograph of Moses holding the Ten Commandments in Hebrew, the President wrote in his own handwriting: "The fundamental basis of this Nation's law was given to Moses on the Mount."

There is a tenderness, a devotion in his relation to his family, which are heart-warming. He seems to be a very kind-hearted man, a good bit of a sentimental-ist. He writes here:

I am always so lonesome when the family leaves. I have no one to raise a fuss over my neckties and my haircuts, my shoes and my clothes generally. I usually put on a terrible tie which not even Bob Hannegan or Ed McKim would wear, just to get a loud protest from Bess and Margie. And when they are gone, I have to put on the right ones and it's no fun.

Comparisons are odious, but is it not refreshing to hear from the occupant of the White House in these days of sophistication and the crumbling of the American home, words like these: "I don't like divorces because I think that when you make a contract, you should keep it. The marriage contract is one of the most sacred in the world."

And under date of June 5, 1945, he wrote in one of his notes to himself:

Go~~d~~ back to the White House at 10:30. Called the Madam and talked to her and my baby birl (she does not like that designation). I cannot help wanting to talk to my sweetheart and my baby every night. I only had one sweetheart from the time I was six. I saw her in Sunday School at the Presbyterian Church in Independence, when my mother took me there at that age, and afterwards in the fifth grade of the Ott School in Independence when her Aunt Nannie was our teacher and she sat behind me. She sat behind me in the sixth, seventh and high school grades, and I thought she was the most beautiful and sweetest person on earth - and I am still of that opinion after twenty-six years of being married to her. I am old-fashioned, I guess.

There is a strong sense of loyalty revealed here by Mr. Truman, and it also characterizes his relationship with his friends, a loyalty which very often unfortunately got him into serious trouble. He is not very discriminating in his loyalties, or rather, he persists in his loyalty when the object of the loyalty has proved himself no longer worthy of it. And in a man occupying such an exalted position, that it is a dangerous kind of loyalty to have.

Mr. Hillman said, "I said, 'You know, it is said about you that you have stood by a man to the last drop of mercy.' Mr. Truman replied, 'I would rather have that said about me than to be a great man.'"

In another part of the book he said, "Sometimes people quit me but I never quit people when I start to back them up."

Mr. Truman is a first-rate politician. He believes in politics. Politics to him is government.

It is a pity that some people have a contemptuous idea of politics because politics under our system is government and a man who is not interested in politics is not doing his patriotic duty towards maintaining the constitution of the United States. I am proud to be a politician and to work politically for the happiness and the welfare of the country.

And he gives some advice to people who want to enter politics, and he's a man who can give advice. He knows the political game from A to Z:

"Politics begins in the precincts. A young man who wants a political career must be willing to work wherever he can do the most good. If he can poll the precinct for his organization, he ought to do it. If the organization asks him to run for committee man, he ought to do it. I did, and I got licked the first time I ever ran for township committeeman, but I profited by my experience. I never had a political job that I wanted. But when it was my turn to fill out the Democratic ticket, I always got out and gave it everything I had, and I have never been defeated but once, and that was on account of a split in the Party at home in 1924."

I asked the President what he meant when he said he never wanted any of the public offices he held.

Mr. Truman replied, "I never ran for an office that I wanted to run for. When I ran for Presiding Judge, I really wanted to be the County Collector. But I got out-manuevered on that. Then when I completed eight years as Presiding Judge, I wanted to run for Congress in a new district that had been set up in Missouri. But a judge of the Circuit Court wanted that position, and he out-manuevered me, and I was asked to run for the Senate and I was elected as Senator."

And he didn't want the office of the Vice Presidency, and he was elected Vice-President. And he never wanted the office of the Presidency of the United States. As he says time and time again in the book, he was afraid of it. He told me so in person once. He was dreadfully frightened of the office.

"One rule that I did make in the beginning in politics was that I would have nothing to do with money. I just wouldn't handle it. I wouldn't collect it. I wouldn't distribute it. I wouldn't have anything in the world to do with it, and the boss politicians respected me because of this although they never did understand it."

And he does give a sound bit of advice to his friends, how to win an election.

Maybe some people are really interested in that. He says:

Don't spend a lot of money on advertising. Political advertising just doesn't bring in the votes. Handshakes before election day and precinct workers on that day to see that the voters come to the polls win elections.

And he advises politicians to "quit before it is too late". Most men in public office, he ~~states~~ maintains, stay on too long. They do themselves a great deal of hurt, their reputations, their positions in history, and he quotes great politicians of ancient Rome to prove it, and he strongly urges the limitation in tenure of office for every office in the government.

Mr. Truman steps out of this book as a good-natured man, a sentimentalist, but at the same time, one of very firm convictions. He has confidence in himself. He does not give up easily. He cannot be waved aside. He has the reins of the government firmly in his own hands. And he can be tough. His confidence in himself is evidenced by a line I came across in this book which he wrote in 1948: "I think I have been right in the approach to all questions 90% of the time since I took over." I wonder whether he would have written it in 1952 - he wrote it in 1948.

And finally, this man emerges as a great optimist. He believes in the future of America. He believes in the future of the world. He has great hope that world peace is coming to pass, and he leans very heavily on Point Four, which he propounded to help bring about a condition of progress, security and peace in the world.

Mr. Hillman writes:

President Truman considers his Point Four Program the most important peace policy development of his administration. He is giving this subject his closest personal attention and deep study. He is in constant and frequent consultation about it with experts on agriculture, industry, finance, labor and public health.

The President says, "I consider Point Four a practical answer to a growing crisis in a world torn between aggression and peace. The Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, the North Atlantic Pact, the mobilization program and the action by the United Nations in meeting the military aggression in Korea were steps dictated by a series of emergencies.

"We have bought time at great expense and a terrible cost of lives and fortune, and now we must use that time intelligently and courageously. We face serious trouble unless we realize that our own welfare and that of the rest of the world depend upon the constant and dynamic expansion of the world's resources. The fears that the world is growing too small are groundless. There is room and shelter and food for millions more if we put our know-how to work.

"Point Four takes its name from the fourth position on recommendations to the Congress in my inaugural address of 1949. Point Four is not intended to be a wholesale give-away plan.

"Briefly stated, it is a proposition to take over the gap that is left by the failure of colonialism, only it is different from colonialism in that its objective is to help people to help themselves, with the theory that prosperity of all parts of the world means the prosperity of the whole world.

"There are vast areas in other parts of the world that can be turned into agricultural lands. And in a number of regions in South America there are similar opportunities for expansion of the world's food supply.

"What we want to do under Point Four is to help develop these resources for the benefit of the people who own them. And unless we can do these things, we will never have world peace."

And I think the President is very sound in this regard.

Well, now, one can turn the pages and come across many other ideas, insights into the man, but I think what we have listened to is sufficient indication that we are faced here with a most interesting personality, a human being who is aware of his own limitations and yet realizes that he has been faced in a very political office, but it is his job to do his best to the best of his abilities, face up to his responsibilities, not to walk away from them, and in humility and in modesty he is trying to do the job. Whether he has done it well, whether his program is entirely right, and his methods of achieving his program - on that the citizens of the United States can properly differ. Many of us do. Nevertheless, it is a wholesome personality that we deal here, a sound human being. He has many admirable virtues, and some shortcomings and some failings which we all possess.

1/ Office of the U.S. - most important office in the world. -

~~most powerful office~~
the P. is head - and no figure head - of the richest & most powerful country on earth - the Chief Exec. of a govt. which directs the pol. econ. & social destiny of more than 150 M. people - and which, by its influence on the international scene - affects the fortunes of many hundreds of millions more outside its borders.

While he possesses no absolute power or does a dictator - he possesses, nevertheless, tremendous power - far greater than that of any ~~states~~ King or Prince. There is no constitutional limit on his power.

Therefore anyone who occupies that ~~office~~ ^{very important} office is by the ~~very~~ ^{very} nature of that ~~office~~ ^{very} ~~office~~ ^{office} a very important person - regardless of whether intrinsically he is a great man or not.

And whatever is said by him - and whatever sheds light on him - or serves to reveal and interpret him is of importance.

2/ Mr. T. is today the Pres. of the U.S. - the 32nd or 33rd in that exalted office. - He has been Pres. since the death of Roosevelt in '45 - and will remain in his present office at least until Jan. 1953.

Great ~~events~~ ^{events} ~~have~~ ^{have} taken place during his administration in which he played a key role - and the close, personal witness equally important events.

Anything. : which Mr. T- chooses to say abt. himself - (2)
his beliefs - his plans - his estimate of the present situation -
his outlook for the future - holds great interest for the
Amer. people - and for that matter for the whole world.

Not many pres. have chosen, during their term in
office - and for that matter after - to speak so freely and
with such lack of inhibition abt. themselves - as Mr. T-
in the recent book - called "Mr. P." - which his friend -
Mr. Holloman - White House couns. for the Mutual Broad-
casting System - wrote abt. him.

The Book is neither biography nor autobiography -
but a sort of guided tour - not through the White House
but through the man who occupies the White House.
Looking into the book is like looking into a
family album - or better still - like perusing
the pages of a scrap book - the scrap book, the P.
the V.S.

Mr. T. made available to Mr. Holloman his diaries
letters, ~~private papers~~ ^{many notes} which he wrote for his own files - ^{and a series of} ^{inter-views} ^{and} ^{out}
there Mr. Holloman has constructed this book - 3/4 of ~~which~~ ^{the}
is in text is in the P's own words. Many private
papers, for various reasons, could not be used - for
state or security reasons - or other wise - ~~but enough~~
is out and his diary ~~is~~ ^{has} been used as far as the book is
concerned up to the end of '49

but enough is put together to to illumine and sharply to
delineate a not an involved or complex personality. ~~and~~ (5)
But a ~~very~~ interesting as Mr. Hillman puts it - "a man of
simple tastes, and fine convictions and opinions and old-
fashioned sentiments and proved-looking social liberalism" -
whose hand ^{has been} ~~was~~ on the making of our ship of state ^{in an} ~~during~~
of the most turbulent and critical times in the history
of the world.

3/ The handsome volume is profusely illustrated with
many pictures - some full page and in full color - and
the ~~scraps~~ ^{the} ~~book~~ ^{series} ~~is~~ ^{of} ~~interest~~ ^{interest} ~~by~~ ^{by} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~numerous~~ ^{numerous} ~~pictures~~ ^{pictures} -
not alone, the pres. - his family - ~~and his~~ ^{and his} ~~distinct~~ ^{distinct} ~~spotted~~ ^{spotted} -
- his ~~public~~ ^{public} ~~life~~ ^{life} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~his~~ ^{his} ~~death~~ ^{death} ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~Kansas~~ ^{Kansas} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~Mo.~~ ^{Mo.} -
- his ~~former~~ ^{former} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~opponent~~ ^{opponent} ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~great~~ ^{great} ~~American~~ ^{American} ~~history~~ ^{history} -
but also ~~there~~ ^{there} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~united~~ ^{united} ~~states~~ ^{states} ~~from~~ ^{from} ~~there~~ ^{there} -
Alexander the Great - Julius Caesar - Henry IV, France, Robespierre,
~~Washington~~ ^{Washington} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~Mark~~ ^{Mark} ~~Turner~~ ^{Turner} - he is ~~never~~ ^{never} ~~left~~ ^{left} ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~dark~~ ^{dark} -
is, to speak, introduced to them physically - and the reader's
recollections are never mistaken -

4/ It is neither a controversial nor an apologetic
book: Except in its broadest outlines it is not a
defense of his policies - or of any specific legislation
which he advocated. It is singularly free from
The book is not used to pay off any scores, or to
settle accounts with ~~those~~ ^{those} ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~public~~ ^{public} ~~life~~ ^{life} ~~who~~ ^{who} ~~his~~ ^{his} ~~political~~ ^{political} ~~enemies~~ ^{enemies}.

Here and there the Pres. does try to set the record

straight - or tell his side, the story - of an event which (4)
had created at the time considerable public discussion
or heated controversy in the press. E.g. - his break
with Secy - / H. H. Brown - his break with Bernard M.
Baruch - his the ~~my~~ ^{my}syndy letter which he wrote to the
music centre, Maynard T's. saying - his connection
with Tom Pendergast and his associates -

5. Other wise - the book is ~~even simpler~~ ^{W. H. H. H.} - in a friendly word -
neither to attack nor defend. There is really no new
information or revelation here - but the P. ~~does~~ makes
a forthright effort to be understood by his fellow-citizens -
- He feels that his motives have been right and honorable -
- That he has faithfully discharged the duties of his high office
- That he has carried out the people's mandate. As that
he wanted "peace in the world and a fair deal for
every part, the population of this great nation".
- That the office of the P. is a terribly difficult - and
that the man who occupies it is a terribly lonely
man - and heavily burdened -
- And, in stepping out of office - (for the book, I suspect,
is in the nature of a valedictory) - he would like
to carry away with him the ~~best and~~ affection
of his fellow-men -

6/ And, I believe, to a large extent to succeed. - whether one
opines with his ~~former~~ ^{current} or not. Mr. T. is not a man of
great personal charm - like his distinguished predecessor -
- but the very simplicity, the man - his uncomplicated
values - his ~~simplicity~~ ^{modesty} - the home-spun quality
of his ~~unmercenary~~ ^{unmercenary} - his ~~simplicity~~ ^{modesty} but sentimentality
~~rather~~ ^{rather} ~~than~~ ^{than} ~~their~~ ^{their} ~~own~~ ^{own} appeal - and they make a strong
appeal.

T. emerges from the ~~book~~ ^{time} as a ~~good~~ ^{man} and ~~able~~ ^{man}
~~man~~ - a man in the Amer. tradition - religious
devoted to his family, loyal to his friends, ~~very human~~ ^{self-disciplined}
self-reliant - humane.

7/ "I wish I were a scholar" - he ~~pleads~~ ^{pleads} - and there is a
keynote to the man's ~~life~~ ^{life} of ~~humility~~ ^{humility} and
~~modesty~~ ^{modesty}.

"I missed being a musician, - he ~~claims~~ ^{claims} - and the real and
only reason I missed being one is because I wasn't
good enough!"

His life did not permit him to go to college - but it did
not deny him to read avidly - to keep an open
mind - to seek and acquire much useful information
on many subjects

The book reveals him as an eager student of History -

He is not ashamed of inadequacies - frankly
acknowledges them - and tries to surmount them.

To a friend he wrote: "I don't think there is anybody
in the country who had as rotten a delivery

(over the radio) so I did to begin with but thanks to good friends like you, who have been honestly helpful in their criticism, I think there has been some improvement. 16

Now, I think that's admirable.
"I get the speech seems to have made a bit according to all the papers. I think you never can tell. I thought it was is that?"
8/ He is a deeply religious man.
He read the Bible thru twice before he was 12 yrs. old.

(Read p. 104-5)

9/ ~~He is a~~ There is a tenderness ^{and a devotion} in his relating to his family which are heart-warming. ^{He is a kind-hearted family man (118)} Companions are odious - but is it not refreshing to hear from the occupant of the White House, in these days of sophistication and the crumbling, the American home these words:
"I don't like divorces because I think that when you make a contract, you should keep it. The marriage contract is one, the most sacred in the world."
~~(Read p. 161, 190, 192)~~ (Read 121)

10/ A strong sense of loyalty also characterizes his relationship to his friends: - sometimes gets him into trouble
I said: "You know, it is said about you, that you have stood by a man to the last drop of mercy"
Mr. T. replied: "I would rather have that said about me than to be a great man."
"Some times people quit me just I never quit people when I start to back them up"

11/ Mr. T. is a first-rate politician - He believes in politics -
(195) (196) (197)

~~12/~~ And a sound bat of advice he gives to his friends.

(227)
→ And should quit before it is too late.

12/ Mr. T. - steps out, this book - as a first-natured man -
list of strong and firm convictions. He has confidence in himself. He does not give
way easily. He cannot be waved aside. He is not manipulated
by any one - He has the reins firmly in his
own hands. He can be truth -

"I think I have been right in the approach to all
questions 90%, the same since I took over" he wrote
in 1948 -

13/ Optimist - Believes in future / America - and world

His great hope to assure world peace and progress -
as his Point Four

(249)