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**'Excerpts of Remarks by Nelson A. Rockefeller Prepared for  
Delivery at the Harry Truman Good Neighbor Award Luncheon  
Hotel Muehlebach, Kansas City, Missouri, 12:00 Noon, May 8,  
1978'**

Nelson A. Rockefeller

Happy Rockefeller

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Office of:  
Nelson A. Rockefeller  
30 Rockefeller Plaza  
New York, New York 10020

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Excerpts of Remarks by Nelson A. Rockefeller  
Prepared for Delivery at  
The Harry Truman Good Neighbor Award Luncheon  
Hotel Muehlebach, Kansas City, Missouri  
12:00 Noon, May 8, 1978

You honor me by your invitation to share in this celebration of the birthday of Harry S Truman, a great American and surely one of the greatest Presidents of the United States of America.

Like many of you, I was privileged to know President Truman personally. But, unlike you, I had the special privilege of being fired by him. As a holdover appointment from the previous administration, I was "given my liberty" when I did not resign. The event did not shake the Nation. However, it gave me something in common with General of the Army Douglas MacArthur.

Harry Truman was as American as apple pie and sour mash bourbon. He needed no research nor public opinion polling to know what the great American public thought, what its values were, what it aspired to. Harry Truman was an integral part of that public. And despite the high offices he held and the enormous impact of his leadership upon the whole world, he never left that great American public. Neither the blandishments of privilege nor the temptations of power blunted his common sense or open integrity.

He held fast to his belief in the dignity of the individual -- and all individuals. He never despaired of the common sense judgment of the American people when they knew the facts. He never gave way to cynicism. He hated sham. He never disparaged our basic American institutions and values. The ardor of his patriotism was founded in knowledge, experience and faith.

Harry Truman became our President at one of the most critical times in our history. We were at war on two fronts across the major oceans. The grand alliance that was winning the war against Hitler, however, was already showing signs of coming apart. Stalin was seizing Eastern Europe. The British Empire was disintegrating. Charles de Gaulle was already asserting his impervious independence.

The Japanese war machine, stopped at Midway and defeated in the struggle for Okinawa and Iwo Jima, was still formidable in its home islands fortresses. Calculations estimated a million American casualties would be the price of invasion and ending that war.

At Los Alamos, the Atom Bomb had been developed. The Nation was in shock at Franklin Roosevelt's death. The "father figure" -- that had seen the country through the trials of the depression and four years of world war -- was gone.

So it was when the plain-speaking man from Missouri, who as Vice President had never really been briefed on the affairs of state and war by Franklin Roosevelt, took over the helm of the Nation.

Consider the magnitude of the problems he faced and the courage of the decisions he made:

- the organization of the United Nations at San Francisco;
- the peace with Germany;
- the German occupation by U.S. as well as other forces;
- the dropping of the Atom Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the ending of the war with Japan;
- the setting up of the occupation and government of Japan;
- the economic and military aid program to Greece and Turkey to prevent a communist takeover of those countries;
- the announcement of a policy of containment to prevent communist expansion;
- the development of the Marshall Plan;
- the creation of the NATO alliance;
- the Point IV Program;
- the United Nations international military force against the communist invasion of South Korea.

These are but a few of the decisions Harry Truman made in the international area. They had their difficult counterparts on the domestic side.

Today, as we celebrate his birthday, the aura of his accomplishments blurs the memories of the criticisms, the harrassments, the deprecations that Harry Truman faced as President. It took real courage to surmount a hostile press; to fight a rampant McCarthyism; to overcome an active opposition within his own party; to push for civil rights legislation and, for that matter, to construct the balcony on the South Portico of the White House as designed by Thomas Jefferson.

Harry Truman was not one to hold up decisions that he was convinced were right for the Nation. He didn't wait until he was shown that the litmus paper of public opinion would show no acid reaction. Indeed, he was so forthright and decisive that in 1947 and 1948 it appeared to many that Harry would rather be right than be President for another term.

But that kind of gutsy leadership was what gave him his second term. When he took his campaign to the people, they elected him to the high office which only fate had previously given him.

The purpose of our gathering here is not alone to acknowledge our debt, and that of the whole free world, to Harry Truman, and to commemorate his memory. It is also, in the light of his life, his experience and his contributions, to assess our own efforts, our own judgments, our own courage to face the problems that confront us now.

Harry Truman would have been deeply troubled by the current Soviet worldwide expansion -- a growing threat to freedom everywhere -- in Africa through the use of their Cuban colonial troops -- in Asia through continuing subversion -- underwritten by massive shipments of Soviet arms in both areas.

This whole situation was brought home to me dramatically last week. On the day before I was to visit Afghanistan, a Communist coup overthrew that nation's government. According to accounts in the Indian press, 10,000 Afghans were massacred -- the result being that that fiercely independent and strategic country has now been subjugated and turned into another Soviet satellite.

Harry Truman foresaw the overriding danger of Soviet expansion in 1947 when he enunciated his doctrine of Soviet containment, but we lost sight of our global interests in the aftermath of the national confusion over Vietnam.

The world we face is fraught with new problems and perils different from the time of the Truman Presidency but no less serious.

From a Nation whose currency was the firm foundation for international finance, we have become a country whose dollar has now been depreciated at least 33-1/3% against the strong currencies like the Japanese Yen and the Deutsche Mark -- a dollar whose buying power has been cut virtually in half during the past 10 years.

From a Nation whose technological and military supremacy guaranteed world peace and progress, we have become a Nation which seems content now to rest on its oars while our adversary accelerates its buildup.

From a Nation whose exports sustained vast areas of the world and assisted their rehabilitation after World War II, we now have adverse trade balances unparalleled in our peacetime history.

From a Nation that produced virtually all of its own energy in Truman's years, we now rely on imported oil for more than 50% of our petroleum needs. The era of cheap energy has gone, and the cost of imported oil and gas now burden not only our balance of payments but our domestic economy as well. Such dependence upon foreign oil supplies makes us extremely vulnerable economically, undermines the value of the dollar and puts us in a vastly less favorable national defense and diplomatic posture in a troubled world -- and we've done nothing about it!

If he were here today, Harry Truman would be really troubled. He knew that a secure and plentiful supply of energy was basic to our national security and economic well-being. He had seen the dependence of this Nation on petroleum. He had seen domestic production in 1952 fall far short of our needs. He fought for national title to offshore oil fields against the claims of individual states. And 'way back in 1952 he said:

"...it is of the utmost importance that the exploration of the submerged lands -- both on the marginal sea belt and the rest of the Continental Shelf -- for oil and gas fields should go ahead rapidly and any fields discovered should be developed in an orderly fashion which will provide adequate recognition for the needs of national defense."

Here we are, 26 years later, and only in the past few months or so have oil drilling rigs begun to do exploratory drilling off the Atlantic coast!

Despite the harrowing experience of the Arab boycott, despite the creation of OPEC and the increase in world oil prices, despite the obvious dangers to our economy and our security from over-dependence on imported energy and the extreme danger of ever higher prices for oil, we still have no national energy policy. Indeed, of all the major nations, the United States, which uses more energy and depends upon a plentitude of energy more than any other, has done the least to ensure the continued availability of energy within our borders. Ironically, we have the technical, scientific and resource capacity to meet our needs -- if only we make up our minds to do it.

In the nuclear field, we are stalemated by controversy and indecision. From the Nation that pioneered atomic development and that under Truman undertook to share the peacetime uses of this new energy source with the rest of the world, we have become halting and hesitating. In fact, the situation has even reached the point where it is seriously proposed that we contain technology, arrest development and stop its application.

Yet, if postwar nuclear history has shown us anything, it is that nuclear knowledge cannot be contained. Research and development recognize no enduring monopoly by any one nation. Indeed, the history of the modern world has demonstrated that technology and progress march together; that technology and quality of life are married; and that technology and survival are inseparable.

I agree with Harry Truman, who put it this way:

"In this list of atomic developments, I have put the peaceful uses and the military uses side by side. It is a matter of practical necessity in the kind of world in which we live today that we give priority to security; but I have always had the profound hope that atomic energy would one day soon serve its rightful purpose -- the benefit of mankind."

Of course, we applaud the idea of harnessing solar energy, but we know that practical considerations of cost and technology will inevitably delay and limit its large-scale utilization. Clearly, nuclear technology for the generation of energy, along with coal and the use of alcohol in gasoline made from surplus grain, sugar and even garbage, is one of the keys to economic self-reliance of this Nation in the energy field, to freedom from the fear of embargo and the drain of excessive imports on our balance of payments. Despite all those dire predictions of impending doom, we have had nuclear-generated electric power on a commercial basis for 20 years and no accidents have occurred involving public injury. In this same period, 909,726 people have been killed by automobiles. Yet I know of no movement to "ban the automobile." Let's have some of that Truman common sense on this issue, too.

That common sense also must be applied to the role of nuclear technology in our national defense. Thus it is imperative that the United States proceed with nuclear developments and that it develop, produce and deploy the neutron bomb.

This weapon can give us and our NATO allies a significant new means to offset within the European theatre the overwhelming Soviet numerical strength in conventional military weapons that hangs like a sword of Damocles over Free Europe. Without the neutron bomb, our ultimate recourse to a Soviet massive attack in Europe would be an intercontinental nuclear strike which the Soviets could survive -- and retaliate against the United States with devastating effect. Thus, by counter-balancing the growing threat of Soviet supremacy in conventional military forces, the neutron bomb can help free us and the other Free World nations from the threat of Soviet blackmail.

But, Harry Truman also knew that economic and military strength were not enough to defend the security and well-being of America; we must have the best intelligence system as well. Thus, in addition to Truman's recommendation to the Congress for the creation of the Defense Department and the National Security Council in 1947, on his recommendation the Congress also established the Central Intelligence Agency. I'm sure he would be aghast at the decimation and disarray of our intelligence services today. In Harry Truman's words:

"A President has to know what is going on all around the world in order to be ready to act when action is needed... The second war taught us this lesson -- that we had to collect intelligence in a manner that would make the information available where it was needed and when it was wanted in an intelligent and understandable form."

I equally believe Harry Truman would not have countenanced any domestic unauthorized CIA activity or excess. But in dealing with anyone who violated the law, he would not have thrown out the baby with the bath water -- and he would have reaffirmed his total support of those who gave their lives and their loyalty to defending the security of our country.

President Truman understood the dangers we faced.

I remember Jim Forrestal, former Secretary of Defense, telling me of being with President Truman when he received the message from General MacArthur that the North Koreans were invading the South and that American lives were in jeopardy. Jim said that the President with his typical courage and decisiveness simply sent a message back to General MacArthur ordering him "to get the Americans out of Korea -- and to get the North Koreans out too."

He understood the importance of economic strength. Thus he saw that, to support the Korean war effort, the United States would have to expand the base of its productive capacity.

Therefore, he set a goal of a 25% increase and got Congress to permit a certification of national necessity for new production facilities that provided the incentive of a fast write-off for all essential investment. He understood that the new investment was essential for economic growth, which in turn was essential for economic strength and jobs. He also knew that this was essential to equal opportunity for all.

His courage and decisive action worked, and American enterprise achieved his goal of increasing our productive capacity by 25% within a short space of time.

This experience demonstrates that, with a clear sense of purpose and proper incentives, the people of this country can conquer their problems and attain new levels of freedom and quality of living -- not only for themselves -- but all humanity.

Harry Truman worked for these goals. He strived to maintain this as a land of opportunity, to build on its strengths, as well as correct its weaknesses. He had an impatience with those who denigrate our values. He emphasized in his time the basics of our unique American economic system and the strengths of our political and social order.

We've just been through a period in which the deriders, the belittlers, the detractors and iconoclasts have had a field day. An unpopular war in Vietnam, the Watergate business, scandals in government and in the private sector of our national life, have all accentuated the negative.

It's time we heard not only what's wrong with America but what's right about it, too!

A democratic society cannot exist without criticism. But it cannot exist, either, without a fundamental faith in democracy itself and the institutions of a free society.

Let's get on to a renewed sense of common effort to renew the Nation's strength and liberate its basic dynamism.

We have got to have trust and confidence in the ability of our institutions to adjust to change. And we've got to provide those institutions with a sense of national purpose and a stable framework of laws within which they can make the adjustments and build to meet the future needs of America.

This also means a social and governmental climate that will make it possible for our institutions to attract creative leadership and enable leadership to function.

In the haste to root out scandal, in the rush to purge the unpopular, in the hurry to cast out and castigate the abusers of power and trust, we have shackled necessary instruments of power, centers for decision and creative springboards for action.

Today, we've got more critics, more prosecutors, more accountants, more auditors, more investigators, more dopesters, more commentators and more kibitzers than ever in our history. It's high time we have more deciders, more doers, more producers.

I'm sure that, were he here today, Harry Truman would agree that as a Nation:

- We need decision, not delay.
- We need energy, not equivocation.
- We need production, not promises.
- We need strength, not weakness.

And we need to be able to stand the heat in the kitchen that Harry Truman talked about.

Indeed, in a dream I had about this speech, Harry Truman appeared briefly and said ten words: "Nelson, give them my best, but also give them hell."

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