

Longhand Note of Judge Harry S. Truman

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May 14, 1934

Tomorrow, today rather, it is 4 A.M., I am to make the most momentous announcement of my life. I have come to the place where all men strive to be, at my age and I thought two weeks ago that retirement on a virtual pension in some minor county office was all that was in store for me.

When I was a very young boy, nine or ten years old my mother gave me four large books called Heroes of History.

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The volumes were classified as "Soldiers and Sailors", "Statesmen and Sages" and two others which I forget now. I spent most of my time reading those books, Abbotts Lives and my mother's big Bible. When I was twelve I had read the Bible all the way through twice besides all the extra reading matter in the back of it. I remember that there is a number of stories about

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Biblical Heros with what I thought were beautiful illustrations. They impressed me immensely. I also spent a lot of time on the 20th Chapter of Exodus and the 5th, 6th & seventh Chapters of Mathew's Gospel. I am still at fifty, of the opinion that there are no other laws to live by, in spite of the professors of psychology.

In reading the lives of great men, I found that the first victory won

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was over themselves and their carnal urges. Self discipline with all of them came first. I found that most of the really great ones never thought they were great, some of them did. I admired Cincinnatus, Hannibal, Cyrus the Great, Gustavus Aldolphus of Sweden, Washington and Lee, Stonewall Jackson and Jeb Stuart. Of all the military heros Hannibal and Lee were to my mind the best because while they won every battle they lost the war due to crazy politicians in both instances, but they were still

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the great Captains of History. I found a lot of heroes were made by being in at death or defeat of one of the really great. Scipio, Wellington, and U.S. Grant are the most outstanding. I was not very fond of Alexander, Attila, Ghengis Khan or Napoleon because while they were great leaders of men they fought for conquest and personal glory. The others fought for what they thought was right and for their countrys.

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They were patriots and unselfish. I could never admire a man whose only interest is himself.

When I was about six or seven years old my mother took me to Sunday School and I saw there the prettiest sweetest little girl I'd ever seen. I was too backward to even look at her very much and I didn't speak to her for five years.

From the fifth grade in school

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until my graduation from High School we were in the same classes. If I succeeded in carrying her books to school or back home for her I had a big day.

When High School was finished my father's finances became entangled and I went to work, first as a single wrapper for the Kansas City Star then as a time keeper on a railroad and then a bank clerk in the National Bank of Commerce, Kansas City. It took all I received to help pay family expenses and keep my brother

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and sister in school.

Then when I was twenty-two we arranged to move back to my mothers old home farm of some six hundred acres. It belonged to my mother's mother a wonderful old woman. She had red hair and was of Scotch-Irish parentage from Kentucky. She would tell us stories of her pioneering days in Jackson County in the 1840's when we urged her. She was a very

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quiet, determined woman and the grandchildren all thought she was right in everything and I think she was. She raised her family while her husband took ox team freight trains to Salt Lake City and San Francisco, ran the farm and did whatever was to be done without complaint. She lived to be ninety one and every member of her family and her neighbors sincerely regretted it when she died.

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My father, brother and myself ran the farm for ten years and I had the best time I ever had in my life. We raised corn, wheat, oats, potatoes, hogs and fed some cattle. I set up and operated all sorts of farm machinery and really liked to do it. Then the world war came. I had always been a Democrat naturally because my father and mother had lived here on the border between Kansas

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and Missouri. Their older relatives were in the Confederate Army and they became Rebel Democrats. When I was twenty one I joined the National Guard. Battery B was organized on Flag Day 1905 and I joined. When I showed my beautiful blue full dress uniform to my old red haired Grandmother she gave me the only scolding she ever did and told me not to bring it in the house again.

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I had to be diplomatic with that uniform.

Soon after we moved back to the farm I began going to call on my school girl sweetheart. I'd never had another and never have. When the World War came we were ready to get married but since I had to go I didn't think it was right to get married and maybe come home a cripple and have the most beautiful and sweetest girl in the world

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tied down. So we waited until I came home.

The World War made a tremendous impression on me. I'd studied history to some extent and was very much interested in politics both at home and in Europe. When Germany invaded Belgium my sympathies were all on the side of France and England. I rather felt we owed France something for Lafayette. When we got into the struggle I helped organize the 2nd Mo

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Field Artillery. Old B Battery was expanded into a regiment. I was elected a first lieutenant in Battery F although I only expected to be a sergeant or maybe a second lieutenant. It was quite a blow to my mother and sister for me to leave the farm.

My father had died in 1915-a sad blow to me because we were real partners. He thought I was about right and I know he was. I was with him the night he passed on and

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I have never forgotten it. My brother had married and was the father of twins. He'd moved to an adjoining farm and that left me in complete charge of both my Uncle's and my mother's farms. My old grandmother had left all her property to my mother and her old bachelor brother for whom I was named.

It was quite a responsibility but I tried to make a go of it. So when the war came along I left my sister in

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in charge with a hired man and pulled out for Camp Doniphan where the Colonel put me in charge of the canteen for the regiment. I collected two dollars per head from each of the battery funds for each man on the roll and set up in business with some \$2200.00 capital. There was a fine Jewish boy in my battery who had been in merchantile

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business in Kansas City, so I got the Colonel to order him to take charge of the canteen. Then I moved all the six battery barbers and the regimental tailor into the canteen building and real business started. In six months we paid \$15000.00 in dividends to the battery funds, gave them their original investment back and still had our stock on hand to do business. That Jewish boy and I really thought we were business men.

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About this time our Colonel and Lt. Col. (both of whom we all hated) were ordered to school and Col. Robt. M. Danford who wrote the instruction book on Field Artillery before the war was sent to take charge of the regiment. When he saw our canteen and heard a report on it over at Division Hqtrs. He ordered me up for promotion along with Ted Marks and Newell T. Paterson. Old Gen. Lucien G. Berry conducted the exam-

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ination and his object was not to find how much we knew, but how much we did not know. When we could answer, it displeased him but when we couldn't he'd rattle his false teeth, pull his handle bar mustache and stalk up and down the room yelling at us "Ah, you don't know do you? I thought you were just ignorant rookies. Now you aspire to be officers and gentlemen sure enough by becoming

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Captains in the United States Army. It will be a disaster to the country to let you command men etc etc." But the old devil finally passed us all and some two or three months later commissions as Captains followed us all over France. The examination was in February, the commissions were dated in April and I got mine in October. If I hadn't seen the notice in the New York Times I could never have bought

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those two bars.

My mother & sister came to see me at Camp Doniphan. My mother was sixty five years old but she never shed a tear, smiled at me all the time and told me to do my best for the country. But she cried all the way home and when I came back from France she gain ten or fifteen pounds in weight. That the real horror of war.

I was ordered overseas with the special school detail of the Division. We left Doniphan on

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Mar. 20th about noon by the Rock Island and arrived in Kansas City at 4 A.M. I got a switchman out in the Rosedale yards to let me use his phone and I called my mother and my sweetheart. It was the last time I talked to either for a year and two months.

On March 30 the day before Easter Sunday we sailed aboard the Geo. Washington for France. There we were watching New York's skyline diminish and wondering if we'd be heroes or corpses. Most

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of us got by without being either. We had an uneventful crossing and landed at Brest on the morning of April 13, 1918. It was a beautiful morning one of the few we had while over there. They sent the officers to the Continental Hotel and men to Pontanezen Barracks. We stayed in Brest two or three days and then went to Monterrey-sur-Aul to school. Col. Dick Burleson (a Texas Burleson) was in charge. He was a hard boiled gentleman but he knew his artillery and

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he could impart his knowledge. He taught me to shoot a 75 gun and taught me so well I became able to teach others. We rejoined our regiment on June 8 at Angers where I acted as Bu Adjutant for Major Marvin H. Gates of the Second Bu. For one whole month, a most pleasant month one I'll never forget. Then we moved to Coetquidan where all the regimental officers except the ones who'd been to Burleson's school went to school again.

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On the 10th of July the Colonel sent for me. I went over everything I'd done for the last ten days to see if I could find out what I was to be balled out for, but could think of nothing. I waited around in his office until he'd dressed down a second lieutenant or two and then my time came. He suddenly said to me "Harry, how would you like to command a battery?" "Well sir" I said "I hope to be able to do that some day." "All right you'll take command

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of D Battery in the morning." I saluted about faced and walked out. Then I told the Major that my tour of duty in France would be short because Klemm had given me D Battery. They were the wild Irish and German Catholics from Rockhurst Academy in Kansas City. They had had four Commanders before me. I wasn't a Catholic I was a 3rd degree Mason. I could just see my hide on the fence when

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I tried to run that outfit. July 11, 1918 at 6:30 A.M. I took the Battery and I was the most thoroughly scared individual in that camp. Never on the front or anywhere else have I been so nervous. But I took over and kept them until the end of the war. They'd march, fight, shoot or do anything for me and when we parted company on May 6, 1918 they gave me a silver cup a foot high all engraved

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with things I didn't deserve.

When we were discharged I went home but I couldn't sit still or stand still. On June 28, 1919 I was married to my boyhood sweetheart, we are still married and always will be.

I finally decided to sell all my farm equipment, hogs, horses, cows, harness and whatnot and go into business with my Jewish friend, my canteen sergeant, Edward Jacobson, on 12th Street in Kansas City. We opened up in December 1919 and for one whole year business was as

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everyone in business hopes it will be. We paid our clerks and ourselves good salaries and then the squeeze of 1921 came and completely eliminated us and our business. By the fall of 1922 we were so hopelessly in debt that a closeout was necessary. I'd put all my farm sales money and some twelve thousand of borrowed money into the business, besides signing a five year lease at \$350.00 per month. I am still paying on those debts.

Along in 1915 I met a promoter by the name of Jerry Culbertson through one of our farmer neighbors. This neighbor, a good man by the

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name of Tom Hughes had been Sheriff of Cass County at the same time that Jerry had been Prosecuting Attorney of the same County. Mr. Hughes had invested in several gold mines with Mr. Culbertson, none of which had made any returns on the investment.

* Mr. Culbertson interested Mr. Hughes and me in a zinc and lead mine at Commerce Okla. And I undertook to run it, along with a red haired hoisting engineer by the name of Bill

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Throop. Bill was all wool and a yard wide but we couldn't make our mine pay. He asked me to raise \$2500.00 and buy a drilling machine and go up north of Pitcher, Okla. and prospect the land up there for lead and zinc. But I'd already put all my ready money into the Commerce Mine and couldn't raise the \$2500.00. If I'd done it we'd both be rolling wealth today. The Commerce Mine petered out and I lost \$2000.00. Mr.

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Culbertson, then organized an oil company and Hughes and I were suckers enough to go into it. Some \$200,000.00 was raised and leases were bought in Texas, Okla. and Kansas. At the time the war came we had a well down nine hundred feet on a 320 acre lease at Eureka Kansas. I got all patriotic and joined the army. My partners got into a fuss and let that lease go to pot. Another company took it over and drilled

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a well on it and there was never a dry hole found on that 320 acres. It was the famous Teeter Pool. If I'd stayed home and run my oil company I'd have been a millionaire. But I always did let ethics beat me out of money and I suppose I always will.

When my furnishings store on 12th Street was about to blow up in 1922 it became time to nominate a Judge of the County Court for Jackson County from the Eastern District. Since I'd married I'd

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lived in Independence. It was thought that an ex soldier was the right man for election. There were two factions in the County then and are yet, one called "goats" and one "rabbits." Back in 1914 my father had been a road overseer for the goat faction and when he died I had succeeded him. Then W. P. Borland the Congressman had appointed me Postmaster at Grandview, which job I held until the World War.

Mr. J. Pendergast came in to my store one day and asked me if I'd like to run for Eastern Judge.

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I told him I'd be delighted to do so. He didn't know I was busted. I ran and beat the rabbit candidate by some two or three hundred votes. Judge H. F. McElroy and I were elected as the majority of the County Court with a good old man by the name of E.W. Hayes as Presiding Judge. Hayes was a rabbit. McElroy and I ran the Court and took all the jobs; so that in 1924 when we came up for reelection the "rabbits" scratched us both off the ticket and we were beaten along with the State ticket and all the balance of the Democratic ticket.

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I went to work for the Automobile Club of Kansas City and got them a thousand new members for which I received fifteen thousand dollars in commission. It cost me ten thousand dollars to do the job but I still had enough left for a living.

In the mean time Kansas City adopted a new Charter under the direction of the Republican Administration. When the City election came in 1926 the Democrats won by some 34 votes and Judge McElroy was made City Manager. When the Fall elections

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came I was elected Presiding Judge of the County Court. The most distressing thing in the county at the time was its road system. There were miles and miles of water bound macadam roads and they were being pounded to pieces much faster than they could be repaired. About this time the City (Kansas City) decided to ask for a bond issue to build new buildings, parks and boulevards and I suggested to my associates that we ask for enough money to build a road system. They agreed to it and we then employed

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a couple of outstanding engineers, Col. [MS. illegible], Major General E. M. Stayton and N.T. Veatch Jr. to outline a plan for us. Stayton is a Democrat and Veatch is a Republican. They drew up a fine plan costing \$6,500,000.00 and it was submitted along with some \$28,000,000.00 for Kansas City. The road bonds and some \$250,000.00 of the City bonds carried.

The Court then employed Stayton & Veatch to carry out the road plan. It was carried out to the letter. No favorites for contracts were allowed and in 1931 when the City's ten year plan was rated

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the County received a vote of confidence for \$3,500,000.00 more for roads and \$4,200,000.00 for two new Court Houses, one in Independence and one in Kansas City.

When the last bond issue was voted I went to every city in the country except Los Angeles and Miami, Fla. to see the new civic buildings. It was decided that a colonial structure was proper for Independence at \$200,000.00 and a semi-modern classical building would be proper for Kansas City. The Court insisted on having the

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best architects the City could produce for the creation of the plans and specifications and also hired the Architect of the best Court House plan in the country as consultant.

The Architects were Keene & Simpson and Wight & Wight of Kansas City and Edward F. Neild of Shreveport La. for consultant. The construction of these buildings was handled just as the construction of the county roads was. And now I am a candidate for the United States Senate. If the Almighty God decides that I go there I am going to pray as King Solomon did for wisdom to do the job.