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The Road to the Harry S. Truman Presidency

★ *The 33rd President* ★

1884 Born May 8 in Lamar, Missouri

1887 Moved to a farm owned by Solomon Young near present-day Grandview, Missouri

1890 Moved to Independence, Missouri
Met Bess Wallace in Sunday school at First Presbyterian Church

1892 Entered Noland Elementary School

1900 Served as a page at the Democratic National Convention in Kansas City, Missouri

1902 Worked for 2 weeks



62-95 Baby Truman, 1884*



62-412 Harry S. Truman, age thirteen, 1897*



66-9984 Senior Class Photo, Independence High School, 1901*

1885 Family moved to farm near Harrisonville, Missouri

1901 Graduated from Independence High School
Attended Spalding's Business College

in mailing room of Kansas City Star

1903

Moved with family to Kansas City, Missouri

1905-1906

Bookkeeper for Union National Bank Kansas City, Missouri

1906

Moved to family farm near Grandview, to help parents and brother manage.

1910

1905

Enlisted in the Missouri National Guard June 14
Moved to a rooming house in Kansas City

2-1903

Timekeeper for L.J. Smith on Santa Fe Railroad construction project

idence High School
iness College

1903-1905

Clerk for National Bank of Commerce Kansas City, Missouri



79-22 Harry S. Truman in National Guard uniform*

1905-1911

Served in Battery B of Missouri National Guard

1909

Joined Masonic Order, Lodge No. 450, Belton, Missouri

Missouri
and operate it
egan courting Bess Wallace

1916-1919

Served as treasurer of Morgan Oil and Refining Co

1914

Father died of cancer November 2
Appointed road overseer in southern
half of Washington Township

1917

Rejoined National Guard
Sworn into regular army service
and served in France
Assigned to Fort Sill, Oklahoma
and appointed canteen officer

1914-1918

wwi

1916

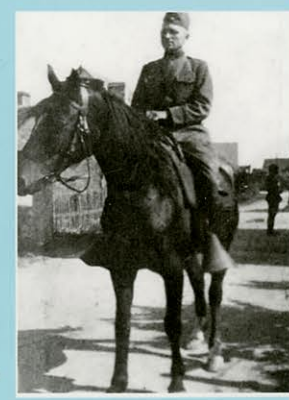
Helped organize an oil-drilling
company, Morgan Oil and
Refining Co

1915

Appointed postmaster in Grandview, Missouri
Invested and lost money in a zinc-mining venture

1911

Organized the first Masonic lodge in Grandview, Missouri



79-19 Harry S. Truman in France during World War I*



73-1668 Wedding photo of Harry and Bess Truman, June 28, 1919

19

Discharged from the army May 6
Married Elizabeth (Bess) Virginia
Wallace June 28
Opened men's haberdashery store
in Kansas City

1923-1925

Attended Kansas City School of Law

1925-1926

Membership salesman for the Kansas City
Automobile Club

1921

Helped form first Reserve Officers
Association unit in the United States,
in Kansas City

1924

Defeated for reelection as judge
Established in partnership, the Community
Savings and Loan Association in
Independence, Missouri
Daughter Margaret born

1927-1934

Served as
of the

1920

Appointed major in Field Artillery,
Officer Reserve Corps



82-315-6 Truman holding baby
Margaret*

1926

Elected president of the
National Old Trails Association
Elected presiding judge of the
Jackson County Court

1924-1932

General Manager for the Community
Savings and Loan Association

1922

Haberdashery business failed as a result of business recession
Won election as eastern judge on the Jackson County Court

Arrived in Brest, France on board
USS George Washington
Promoted to Captain
Engaged in first combat operation in Vosges Mountains

193

Missouri
1931

1934

Won Democratic primary election for the U.S. Senate

Presiding judge
Jackson County Court

1939-1945

WWII

1945

Sworn in as vice president January 20
Sworn in as thirty-third president of the
United States upon the death of President Roosevelt April 12

1945-1953

Served as the 33rd President
of the United States of America

1972

Died at Kansas City Research
Hospital on December 26

1935-1944

Elected president of the
National Old Trails Association
Elected presiding judge of the
Jackson County Court

1933

Appointed federal reemployment director for Missouri

2

Promoted to colonel in the Field Artillery Reserve

1944

Elected Vice President of the United States

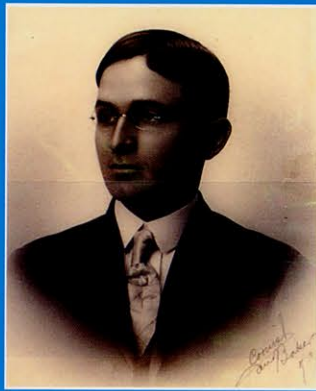


70-5378 Senator Harry S. Truman on
the steps of the Capitol Building, 1940*



1945-1953: 64-1-55 President Truman's inaugural speech,
January 20, 1949*

Harry S. Truman: Biography



Portrait of Harry S. Truman as a young man, ca. 1900*



Captain Harry S. Truman's identity card for the American Expeditionary Forces, ca. 1917*



Young Harry S. Truman with family on a farm wagon, Grandview, Missouri. L-R: Sister Mary Jane; Harry; Mother Martha Young; Cousin Myra Colgan; Brother J. Vivian; and Cousin Nellie Tilford Noland*



Harry with Bess Wallace on a fishing trip, Little Blue River, August 1913. L-R: Mrs. Emma P. Southern, mother of May Wallace, Bess Wallace (holding fishing pole); Harry; an unidentified man, and a young woman, probably Natalie Wallace*

"Boys, if you ever pray, pray for me now. . .when they told me yesterday what had happened, I felt like the moon, the stars

America's 33rd President, Harry S. Truman, was born May 8, 1884 in Lamar Missouri as the first of three children of Martha Ellen, a housewife who appreciated the arts and John Truman, a Missouri livestock trader. Truman's mother taught him to read from the large print Bible before he was five and also exposed him to art and music. Young Truman, having poor eyesight, was told by the eye doctor to avoid sports, thus he spent his time reading and playing the piano. Shortly after moving to a farm near Grandview in 1887, the Truman family moved to Independence Missouri in 1890, where Truman spent the rest of his childhood. It was in Independence that young Truman developed a severe case of diphtheria in the second grade that left his legs, arms and throat paralyzed for months. Despite missing nearly six months of school, he attended summer school to catch up and skipped third grade and went directly into the fourth grade. An excellent student, Truman continued on to complete high school, while most of the children in town stopped going to school after the seventh grade. In his youth, he worked as an usher at Kansas City theaters (as a means to gain free access to musical performances) and worked for several months at J.H. Clinton's drug store, where he cleaned, made ice cream, and waited on customers.

After graduating high school in 1901, Truman went to Kansas City where he studied business at Spalding's Commercial College for one semester. His earlier dreams of becoming a classical pianist never took fruition, nor his dream to attend West Point or Annapolis. Despite taking special courses twice a week to prepare for appointment to one of these academies, Truman was not admitted due to his poor eyesight. After studying for only one semester at Spalding, Truman left school due to financial reasons and worked at various jobs, at first as a mailroom clerk at the Kansas City Star newspaper, then as a timekeeper at a railroad construction company, before entering into banking in

1903. By 1905, he was making \$100 a month working for Kansas City's Union National Bank. A year later, Truman's father lost his investments in the grain market and Truman left the banking industry to help run the family 598-acre farm. In 1914, Truman's father died of cancer, and Truman left farming to pursue two business ventures—an owner and operator of a zinc and lead mine in Oklahoma and as a partner in an oil drilling speculation in Kansas City—both of which failed, leaving him in more debt than before.

Meanwhile, from 1905 to 1911 Truman served in the Missouri National Guard and later in the U.S. Army in 1917 during World War I. During the war, Truman was sent to France and promoted to Captain. Following the war, Truman joined the reserves rising to the rank of colonel. During the outbreak of World War II, as a U.S. Senator, he sought to return to active duty but Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall declined his offer to serve.

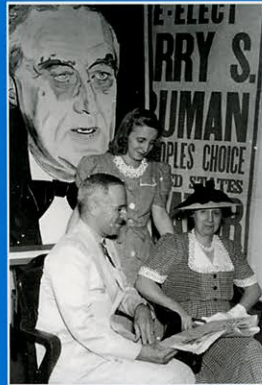
At the end of the war Truman returned from France to marry Elizabeth ("Bess") Virginia Wallace on June 28, 1919. Truman met Bess at First Presbyterian Church in Independence, Missouri when he was six and she was five. They attended school together, and began courting in 1910. Bess, coming from a prominent family, as the third generation owners of the Waggoner-Gates flour mill, refused his first marriage proposal in 1911 as her mother, not keen of their courtship, feared that Truman would never amount to much more than a farmer. In 1913, Truman proposed again, and Bess accepted. The couple shared the birth of one child, Margaret in 1924; the trio later becoming dubbed "The Three Musketeers."

Following his honeymoon with Bess, the couple moved into the Gates-Wallace home, which came to be their lifelong home. Leaving farming for good, Truman ran a men's clothing store from 1919 to

*Courtesy of the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library



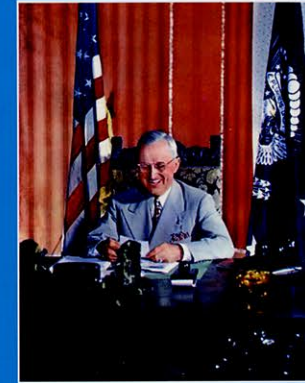
Presiding Judge Harry Truman with fellow judges and clerks, Truman front and center, 1927*



Truman family during the 1940 senatorial campaign*



Truman family, Christmas Holiday, 1949*



President Truman seated at a White House desk, 1945*

and all the planets had fallen on me.” - Truman’s comments upon assuming the Presidency

1922 in Kansas City in partnership with a wartime friend. As a businessman, he kept up with his network of National Guard friends and was active in the American Legion and the Reserve Officers Association, as well civic organizations, like the Triangle Club (a group of businessmen dedicated to improving the city). These social networks were beneficial when his store failed in the postwar recession. Truman narrowly avoided bankruptcy, and eventually paid off his share of the store's debts over many years.

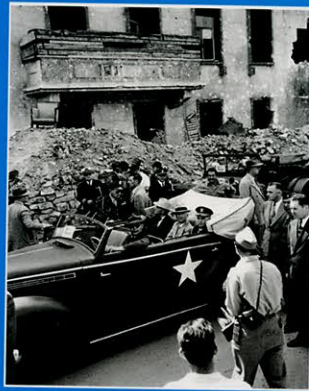
Though his business ventures did not lead to success, his social networks and his leadership on the battlefields of France paid off, resulting in his judgeship on the county court of the eastern district of Jackson County in 1922. An Army friend, Jim Pendergast pulled some strings with his uncle, Tom Pendergast, who ran the Kansas City Democratic political machine and nominated Truman to participate in the election to be one of three judges of the Jackson County Court. Truman won the primary by less than 300 votes and the general election by about 3,000 for his judge seat, where his duties were administrative rather than judicial. Though defeated for reelection in 1924, he won election as presiding judge in the Jackson County Court in 1926 and again in 1930, holding his judgeship until 1934. As the presiding judge, Truman gained experience dealing with inherited debt, which he reduced from \$1 million to \$600,000 in two years, and the opportunity to attend the Kansas City Law School. Aside from debt reduction, one of Truman's major accomplishments as County Judge was the improvement of Jackson County roads. Before leaving his judgeship, he also ensured the completion of a new county courthouse in Kansas City and the remodel of the courthouse in Independence. Truman's reputation that he built as a presiding judge aided him in his entrance into politics.

In 1934 Truman was ready to seek higher office and asked Pendergast to support his run for a seat in the United States House of Representatives. His honesty and efficiency in the management of county affairs led Pendergast to choose Truman not just for a seat in the house but as his candidate for the United States Senate. Truman was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1934 and reelected in 1940. After his reelection, he gained national prominence as chairman of the Senate Special Committee to Investigate the National Defense Program. This committee became known as the Truman Committee and successfully ensured that defense contractors delivered the nation with quality goods at fair prices, which saved the nation over \$15 billion. Truman's reputation had survived the Pendergast Investigation that had initially connected him with the crime family, and his work as a Senator led to his nomination as the new vice presidential running mate for FDR when the President decided to drop his vice president, Henry A. Wallace from the Democratic ticket. Truman was inaugurated as the Vice President in FDR's fourth term on January 20, 1945. His time as vice president was short-lived, having only two brief meetings with the President before becoming president upon Roosevelt's untimely death. On April 12, 1945, Truman was sworn into office as the 33rd President of the United States and again on January 20, 1949.

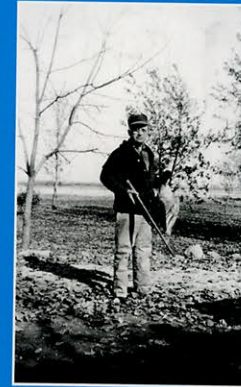
During Truman's administration as president he faced challenges in international affairs and the transition from wartime to a peacetime economy. Upon assuming office, Truman oversaw important foreign policy initiatives: the end of World War II, prevention measures against the expansion of communism, and the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty and the United Nations. World War II in Europe ended with Germany's unconditional surrender May 8, 1945. However, the war in the Pacific persisted and Truman extended terms for peace to Japan, requesting their unconditional surrender.



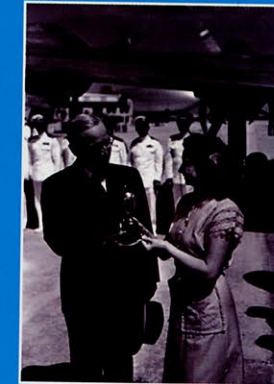
L-R: Churchill, Truman, and Stalin shaking hands at the Potsdam Conference, July 23, 1945*



President Truman riding through Berlin with Secretary of State James Byrnes and Admiral William Leahy, Germany, July 1945*



Truman on a grouse hunting trip; Little Blue River, Missouri, 1936*



President Truman wins a fishing trophy in Boca Chica, Florida, March 15, 1947*

Upon their refusal, Truman became the first president to authorize the use of nuclear weapons, ordering two atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki Japan on August 6 and 9, 1945 as a means to end the war. The plan worked, bringing WWII to an official end upon Japan's surrender on September 2, 1945. After the war, Truman's foreign policy to prevent the expansion and influence of communism led an increasingly strained and confrontational relationship with the Soviet Union. As a means to prevent the spread of communism and counter Soviet power, Truman set several policies in place: the Truman Doctrine (established America's intent to provide military aid to countries resisting communist insurgencies), the Marshall Plan (sought to revive European economies in the hopes that communism would not thrive in the midst of prosperity), and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (formed a military defense alliance between the United States, Canada and Western Europe). In waging war against the spread of communism, Truman utilized all of his foreign policy initiatives, and also authorized the development of the hydrogen bomb in 1950 to counter the Soviet's successful test of an atomic weapon.¹ Truman also saw the official instatement of the United Nations on October 24, 1945. The United Nations², coined by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, began to take fruition with the "Declaration by United Nations" on January 1, 1942, when 26 nations pledged their governments to fight together against the Axis Powers during World War II. On the domestic front, Truman attempted to reform many domestic policies by expanding the New Deal programs through his Twenty-one Point Plan and his Fair Deal. The Twenty-one Point Plan to Congress called for new public works programs, 'full employment', a higher minimum wage, an extension of the Fair Employment Practices Committee³, a larger Social Security System, and a national health insurance system. Congress passed only one: the 'full employment' bill, known as the Employment Act of 1946. Later, Truman

¹ The Truman Doctrine and the United Nations were utilized when North Korea and China invaded South Korea, waging the U.S. and other allies of United Nations in the Korean War in 1950; and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization formed to build a military barrier confronting the Soviet dominated part of Europe as a means to prevent their expansion.

² Soviets caused a delay in the formation of the United Nations, who were reluctant to join, were eventually convinced to sign the charter by Truman

³ An agency that monitored discrimination against African Americans in hiring practices of government agencies and defense industries

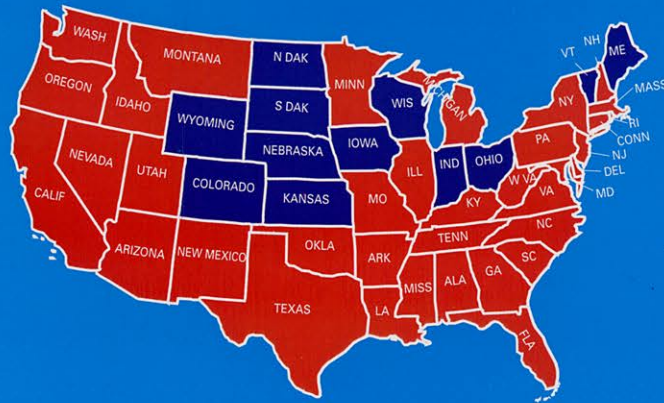
again initiated these reform policies in what he called the "Fair Deal," gaining congressional approval of a public housing and slum-clearance bill, an increase in the minimum wage, and an expansion of Social Security, while failing to gain national health insurance, civil rights legislation, and an agriculture plan to provide income support to farmers. Although the conservative Congress refuted his civil rights legislation, Truman accomplished civil rights legislation by issuing executive orders to desegregate the armed forces and prevent racial discrimination in federal employment. He also established a Committee on Civil Rights and encouraged the Justice Department to argue before the Supreme Court on behalf of plaintiffs fighting against segregation.

After leaving office in January 1953, Truman retired to Independence, Missouri, where he spent his remaining years walking daily, reading, writing, and lecturing. He also took part in founding and supporting his presidential library that opened in Independence on July 6, 1957. Once opened, he worked in his library office nearly every day.

Truman died at Kansas City Research Hospital on December 26, 1972 at the age of eighty-eight. He died from the afflictions of old age, struggling against lung congestion, heart irregularity, kidney blockages, and failure of the digestive system.

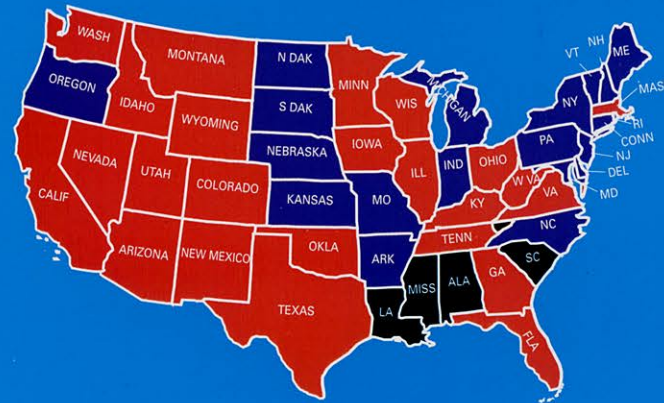
Truman served as the 33rd President of the United States April 12, 1945 to January 20, 1953.

The Presidential Election 1944



(R)F.D. Roosevelt† state victories: 432 - 81.5% 25,602,504 popular votes (53.5%) Electoral votes total: 531
 (D)Dewey state victories: 99 - 18.5% 22,006,285 popular votes (46%) Popular vote total: 47,944,840

The Presidential Election 1948



(R)Truman state victories: 303 - 57% 24,105,812 popular votes (49.5%) Electoral votes total: 531
 (D)Dewey state victories: 189 - 35.5% 21,970,065 popular votes (45%) Popular vote total: 48,687,608
 (D)Thurmond state victories: 39 - 7.5% 1,169,021 popular votes (2.5%)

† Truman ran as the vice presidential running mate and assumed office upon the death of Roosevelt on April 12, 1945

Harry S. Truman: While in Office

1945 United Nations Charter signed • Germany surrendered to Allies ending the war in Europe (V-E Day)³ • Manhattan Project • Atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan • Japan surrendered ending WW II • Twenty-one-point legislation presented to Congress • Called on Congress for enactment of a peacetime universal military training program **1946** U.S. Steel Workers strike • 18.2 cents per hour wage increase to U.S. steel workers • Employment Act signed which established Council of Economic Advisers • Office of Economic Stabilization reestablished • Railroad trainmen and engineer accepted the president's recommendations ending strike • McMahon Act established the civilian Atomic Energy Commission • Loan of \$3.75 billion to Great Britain authorized • New price control act signed reviving the Office of Price Administration • Price controls on meat ended • Republican majorities returned to the Senate and House • Executive order ending all wage and price controls except on rents, sugar, and rice • Proclamation declaring an end of hostilities for WW II • **1947** Marshall Plan • Communist blacklist implemented in sports and entertainment industry • Former President Hoover studied and made recommendations for central Europe's food problem • Good Neighbor Policy reaffirmed with Mexico • Truman Doctrine issued and approved⁴ • Loyalty investigation of all federal government employees • Peace treaty ratifications signed with Italy, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria • \$4 billion income tax reduction bill vetoed as being unfair to small taxpayer • Taft-Hartley Bill vetoed and passed • National Security Act signed⁵ • Treaty of Rio de Janeiro signed **1948** NAACP ended support of "separate but equal" in favor for integration • Executive order ending racial segregation of U.S. armed forces • Universal Declaration on Human Rights approved • Income tax reduction act vetoed and passed • Foreign Assistance Act of 1948 created European Recovery Program • Government operation of railroads by the army to forestall nationwide railroad strike • Recognized new state of Israel • Displaced Persons Act⁶ • Ordered Berlin airlift • Truman elected to second term **1949** Point IV Program to help underprivileged people • Office of U.S. High Commissioner in Germany established • Housing Act signed • National Security Act Amendment establishing a unified Department of Defense • NATO formed • Mutual Defense Assistance Act authorizing funds for military assistance to nations signing the North Atlantic Pact **1950** Atomic Energy Commission ordered to develop the hydrogen bomb • U.S.S.R. and China signed a military alliance directed against the United States and Japan • U.S. air and sea forces aid South Korean troops in their resistance to communist North Korea • American forces blockade Korean coast • Government seizure of U.S. railroads • Defense Production Act • Revenue Act

³Victory in Europe

⁴Requested appropriation for \$400 million to fight the spread of communism in Greece and Turkey

⁵Placed armed forces under the administration of a single secretary of defense, established U.S. Air force as a separate branch, created the CIA and National Security Council

⁶Authorized admission of 205,000 displaced Europeans during a two year time period

increased corporation and income taxes • Truman escaped assassination attempt • State of national emergency proclaimed following the entry of Communist China in the Korean conflict **1951** Twenty-second Amendment passed⁷ • U.S. military rule of Japan ended • Japanese peace treaty signed • India Emergency Food Aid Act lending \$190 million to India to buy up two million tons of grain • Suspension of tariff reductions for Soviet Russia, People's Republic of China, and other communist countries • Mutual Security Act authorizing \$7,483,100,000 for foreign economic, military, and technical aid and establishing the Mutual Security Agency • War with Germany proclaimed officially over **1952** GI Bill of Rights extended to veterans of the Korean War • Plan submitted to Congress to reorganize Bureau of Internal Revenue • Executive order signed to seize steel mills to prevent strike of steel works, Supreme Court deemed seizure unconstitutional • Peace treaty with Japan ratified • Defense treaties signed with Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and the Philippines • U.S. announced successful test of the first hydrogen bomb **1953** U.S., North Korea, and China sign an armistice • Truman administration ended January 20

Key Establishments

Approved creation of NATO • United Nations officially came into existence • Desegregation of the Armed Forces • Successfully aided South Korea in resisting communist forces

Harry S. Truman: Personal Trivia

Presidential Number: 33 **Years President:** 1945-1953 **Age at Inauguration:** 60 **Terms:** 2 **Political Affiliation:** Democrat **State Represented:** Missouri **First Lady:** Elizabeth Virginia Wallace Truman **Vice President(s):** Alben William Barkley **Birthday:** May 8, 1884 **Birthplace:** Lamar, Missouri **Parents:** Martha Ellen Young and John Anderson Truman **Childhood Activities:** Reading and playing piano **Education:** University of Kansas City Law School **Professions:** Bank Clerk, Farmer, Soldier, Businessman, Public Official **Military Service:** Colonel Pre-Presidential **Offices:** Judge and Presiding Judge of the Jackson County Court (MO); U.S. Senate; Vice President of the United States **Religion:** Baptist **Favorite**

⁷Limiting a president to a maximum tenure of two terms

Pastimes: Swimming, walking, fishing, reading, traveling, attending the theatre and playing the piano **Favorite Poem:** Alfred Tennyson's 'Locksley Hall' **Favorite Subject:** History and Biography **Favorite Foods:** Fried Chicken, Steak, Custard Pie, Mrs. Truman's chocolate cake, and chicken with dumplings **Children:** Mary Margaret Truman **Writings:** Memoirs 2 Volumes: *Years of Decision*, *Years of Trail and Hope*; *Mr. Citizen* **Died:** December 26, 1972

Notable Facts

Only president to take office during a war **First** president to have his inauguration televised **First** president to give a speech on television **First** president to be paid a salary of \$100,000 year **First** president to travel underwater in a modern submarine • **First** president in office to use air travel within the country **First** former president to address the U.S. Senate while in formal session in 1965 **First** world leader to employ atomic weapons **First** president to address the NAACP

Honors/Awards

- ❖ Honorary degree from Oxford University June 20, 1956
- ❖ Statue of Truman built in Athens, Greece in 1963 commemorating him as one of Greece's "greatest benefactors"
- ❖ Received South Korea's highest honor, "Order of Merit for the National Foundation Joongjang" from the South Korean ambassador
- ❖ "The Outstanding Television Personality of the Year" award from the American Cinema Editors Association
- ❖ Freedom Award (1965)

Interesting Facts

- ❖ Middle name was just "S" to appease relatives battling for naming honors⁸
- ❖ Dreamed of becoming a concert pianist
- ❖ His wife, Elizabeth Wallace was the longest living First Lady
- ❖ Great nephew of President John Tyler
- ❖ Left-handed, but made to write with his right hand
- ❖ Named one of the 10 best-dressed senators
- ❖ Was a Mason
- ❖ Popularized the saying, "If you can't stand the heat, stay out of the kitchen."
- ❖ Lived in Blair House, the official government guest house, from November 1948 to March 1952 while the White House was being rebuilt and renovated
- ❖ Piano fell through the floor of the White House

⁸Was to be named Shippe taken from his paternal grandfather, yet others in the family wanted Solomon taken from his maternal grandfather