Excerpts of Remarks by Nelson A. Rockefeller  
Prepared for Delivery at  
The Harry Truman Good Neighbor Award Luncheon  
Hotel Muehlebach, Kansas City, Missouri  
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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.