**THE MAN WHO MADE THE DECISION**

Imagine for a moment that you are the Vice President of the United States. It is shortly before 5:00 P.M., and the Senate has just adjourned for the day. You have stopped to chat with the Speaker of the House, but your visit with him is interrupted by a telephone call from the President’s Press Secretary. With a shaky voice, he asks that you come to the White House immediately. You sense that something is wrong as you enter the White House. Your suspicions are all too quickly confirmed when the President’s wife places your hand on your shoulder and says, “The President is dead.”

This event actually happened that quickly on April 12, 1945. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who had led to the American people through 12 difficult years of depression and war, had died. Suddenly, and without warning, the President’s heavy burden of power and responsibility had shifted to the shoulders of Vice President Harry S Truman. As the news and the shock of the President’s death spread across the nation, people turned to each other and echoed the same question, “Who is Harry Truman”

The man who now was President could look back upon his boyhood on a farm in Jackson County, Missouri. He completed high school and served as an artillery officer in World War I. After the war, he went into the men’s clothing business and failed. In 1922 he began a political career in Kansas City which eventually led to his election as a United States Senator in 1934 and 1940. His work as chairman of a committee investigating war production won him recognition and the vice president nomination in 1944. As Vice President, Truman was little known and overshadowed by the towering figure of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Now Roosevelt lay dead, and Truman was the President. Soon he would be faced with, perhaps, the most difficult decision that any President (or any man) has had to make. Truman expressed his feelings best to newspaper reporters the day after Roosevelt’s death, when he said, “Boys, if you ever pray, pray for me now… When they told me yesterday what had happened, I felt like the moon, the stars and all the planets had fallen on me.”