

Wonderful reenactment of President Harry S. Truman's 1953 visit to Clinton

by Allen Grimes, Ulrich

Let history record that on Saturday, May 7, Jim Raysik chauffeured President Harry S. Truman to the Clinton Bandstand in a vintage 1953 Chevrolet, where they were greeted by a group of loyal fans and Democrats. Actually, Jim escorted Raymond T. Starzmann, a historian and reenactor, to the Clinton historic square; but I digress.

After the initial greetings and introductions, the President gave a fifty minute speech on his many accomplishments in politics with the theme of Principle verses Politics. "To win in politics you don't have to sacrifice your principles."

Truman's made many momentous decisions, such as the use of the atomic bomb, creation of the United Nations, the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, the Berlin Airlift, recognition of Israel, establishment of NATO, and commitment to Korea. Through these decisions, he clearly defined his principles of upholding civilian

control over the military, recommending Medicare, support for economic justice and struggle for civil rights at great political risk, which clearly displayed his courage.

After the speech, President Truman and the group continued the birthday celebration at the Rotary building for a pot luck dinner and cake. At the conclusion of the event, the President reminisced of life after the White House in Independence.

Mr. Starzmann, the actor, gave a wonderful performance. With the Truman hat, wire rimmed glasses and attire of the era, Mr. Starzmann looked just like the President Truman we remember. He had a deep and thorough understanding of the President, displayed by his mannerisms, sense of humor and warmth of his personality. As you glanced over the audience, they were very respectful. Their eyes were focused on Mr. Starzmann trying to catch every word he spoke, every gesture.

and laughed on cue at Truman's Missouri wit. The audience participated by sharing their experience and asking a lot of questions. One member in the audience stated that he learned more about history in one day than in a life time and enjoyed it.

Mr. Robert Dallek, author and historian, wrote, "By 1991, the collapse of the Soviet Union had vindicated Truman's judgment on the wisdom of containing rather than fighting for all out war with communists, as MacArthur had urged. His contribution to victory in the cold war without a devastating nuclear conflict elevated him to the stature of a great or near great president." David McCullough wrote that Harry Truman was a special president, who deserved to be remembered in a league with Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt as the best modern occupant of the White House.

Mr. Starzmann's performance would have made all Missourians proud of our President Truman.