

A Call to Truman

When the call came from Steve Early, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's press secretary, Harry Truman responded immediately. He arrived only minutes later at the front door of the White House, stopping only to pick up his trademark hat, but leaving the Secret Service escort behind.

He was ushered directly to Mrs. Roosevelt's suite, where the First Lady rose to greet him, then put her arm around his shoulder and said, "The President is dead."

This was the first inkling that Truman had of the seriousness of President Roosevelt's condition. He asked if he could do anything for Mrs. Roosevelt and the family, and she replied by asking him if there was anything they could do for him. Truman then went to the Oval Office and called his wife, Bess, who relayed to their daughter, Margaret, what had happened.

They both came quickly to the White House, and by 7 o'clock that evening, April 12, 1945, Harry Truman had been sworn into office as the nation's 33rd President.

The family went home, and as was later noted in Truman's diary, "The neighbors gave us something to eat. I had not had anything to eat since noon. I went to bed, went to sleep, and did not worry anymore."

The next morning, Truman strode into the Oval Office and began to master the job he always liked to say was the greatest in the world.

Although it may seem incidental to the story, the rest that Truman got that night was significant. He had just taken on an awesome responsibility as the leader of the free world, and was faced with finding closure to a great struggle, World War II. Before tackling a tough job, he slept.

The best bridge between hope and despair is often a good night's sleep. When we are refreshed physically, emotionally and spiritually, we are fully in tune as a person, and our performance in the service to our residents is at a peak.

--Beecher Hunter