

April 13, 1945

Dear Sumner:

The sudden death of President Roosevelt has caused a great pall of deep sorrow over the entire country and over most of the world. The death of the President came at the most inopportune time and therein lies its greatest tragedy. The good will which he had personally built up by conferences with Churchill and Stalin was to have been the reserve upon which he could draw first at San Francisco and later at the peace table. Personal relationships and personalities have played as important, if not the most important, role in the development of civilization as any other single factor. The world is made up of human beings and no problem can be solved merely by the application of scientific processes to high goals and ideals. The personal touch has often been the determining factor and in developing that personal touch has lain Roosevelt's greatest strength. He was a lover of mankind. His charm and kindness were magnets and his influence was thereby all persuasive.

I would like to tell you a story that was told to me only last night at the monthly dinner of the forty and eight. I was sitting at a table with Hiram Cole, a grocer from South Portland. His father, who died at the age of 86, was in 1935 or 1936 the oldest living active grocer in this country. The National Grocers' Association, with a great fanfare of trumpets, made a national survey and discovered this fact. As a result the old gentleman was given a trip to Washington where he was to be granted a five minute interview with the President. Accompanying the old man were his son, the then Congressman Jim Oliver, and Elisabeth May Craig. The interview was scheduled promptly at noon. They got there a few minutes before and the secretary cautioned them that the interview was to be for only five minutes and that when that time had expired, they were to say that they realized that the President was a busy man and that they appreciated the honor he bestowed upon them by granting the interview, and then they were to leave. Exactly at noon they walked in to the President's office and were cordially greeted. Roosevelt wanted to know where the grocery store was located and when he told him that it was near Two Lights, he recalled Bug Light and then talked about Casco Bay. Then he talked about his own experiences at Hyde Park and his visit to the country grocery store. In that manner he kept them not for five minutes but for twenty-two, and his gracious manner endeared him to the Coles, pere et fils, who stated that they were "Civil War Republicans" but that he as the President had kept them in business by his Federal Relief Program. When they left the President and walked out, the secretary looked daggers at them and told them that they had completely upset the schedule for the entire afternoon, and that Mayor LaGuardia had been waiting since five minutes past twelve. They saw LaGuardia pacing up and down in the anteroom. Now the obvious point to this story is that, despite the fact that this visit was the least important and that people of real prominence were scheduled to see the President on really important matters that afternoon, the President took time out to talk to plain, simple folks and he had done practically all the talking. What better evidence of the warm, vibrant, human personality that he was.

Now that warmth and vibrancy projected themselves in every meeting he had with anybody, be it the Coles, or the Republicans who hated his political guts, or Stalin or Churchill. That personality was so desperately needed at the San Francisco conference. All we now can do is to hope and pray that in his death his influence will be felt the stronger and his spirit of human kindness will in his death, even more than in his life, influence the minds of the world's representatives to laying sound and solid foundations for a great international community.

To write anything else at this moment may be irreverent. So with deep respect for a warm human soul I close this brief word to you.

Affectionately,

*Saddy*