

May 2nd

Dear Ones,

I wrote very short and snappy birthday V-mails to Uncle Arch's kids and to Uncle Harold. Rudy Lewsen was in today and he tells me that Bob Couri was killed in Europe - I am sorry to hear it. I wonder what has become of Leon Gorman. No special news today - I should write to Neil and Aunt Ida and Aunt Anne tonight; the mail consisted of the Truman-covered TIME.

It doesn't seem very smart to run through all these clippings for comment - there has been so much written and said about both Roosevelt and Truman, the facts and details of their lives, political and personal, that most of the clippings can be divided into the two categories of fact and opinion and I will discard the former. As I look over the clippings I have saved I can see that there is only one thing to talk about - it will be a continuation and probably a repetition of my previous letter. (In the various clippings it is easy to tell who were pro-Roosevelt and who were not sympathetic with his policies, but that is beside the point since unity is the keyword for all and in terms of our requirements and our demands of the present the net result has been a swing behind Truman.) What I want to get at - although I must admit that I am terribly rusty on this topic - is the question of the Constitution and the nature of our government and our national politics. For it is clear that we have lost the personal element of Franklin Roosevelt in our government; we will no longer have the emphasis on the executive branch of our government to the extent of the "Palace Guard" of men like Hopkins and Rosenman - the impetus for policy and programming will come more and more from the prevailing attitudes of the Congress, the Executive branch will lose the personal contact with the complexity of home and world problems. As to whether all this is good or bad - basically, because of our economic prosperity, when it comes to outward form Americans are pretty conservative politically - and the result of Truman's being President may very well be that our governmental achievements may be greater because of a lack of conflict between the two formative branches, the argument being that the most inspired President in the world gets no place without a cooperative Congress and hence in the long run we would lose out. I do not agree with that argument - I think it is a negative approach, and that is why I hope that Truman is sincere in saying that he will continue the Roosevelt outlines of policy, that is why I hope that Wallace and the CIO-PAC will give support to him for a continuing progressive social policy. Our national periods of greatness have been characterized by great personalities - it is rare indeed that history records an era where greatness found its fountainhead in the mass rather than in the individual; and our founding fathers did not overlook that fact. The President is our only nationally, popularly elected political figure - he alone is the direct representative of the people. And he was given a separate branch of the government - he was given the cabinet, he was given many powers, and not insignificantly his branch was known as the Executive branch. The cry of "personal rule" raised against a strong figure in the Presidency is not new by any means - Jefferson was pictured as bearing down the pillars of our country and the criticisms heaped on Lincoln must fill many pages of Sandburg; the great Congresses? how many do you recall? It is simple and obvious - it is part of the individualism that makes each of us a democrat; do not condemn it because it makes others demagogues. It is my belief that the role of the executive branch is to lead effectively - but effectiveness must not be carried to the point of giving up leadership; the personality of the President should be the strongest in the land, by definition and by the fact of election it is the voice of the land. We do not have the British system where the leader of the government is only as strong as his support in the representative body, where the executive and the legislative are uniquely melded together. We have a system which by definition requires strength in leadership for strength in achievement at the critical point. The vigor of the President, his ability to select new and wise policy, his initiative in presenting the national picture to local representatives, are indices of the progressive spirit of our country. As the years roll on, as we become more acute and astute politically as we recognize political responsibility on the international and national fronts, we will find that our best assurance for capturing and maintaining that progressive spirit is through the executive branch of our government. It is no more than the fact of leadership.