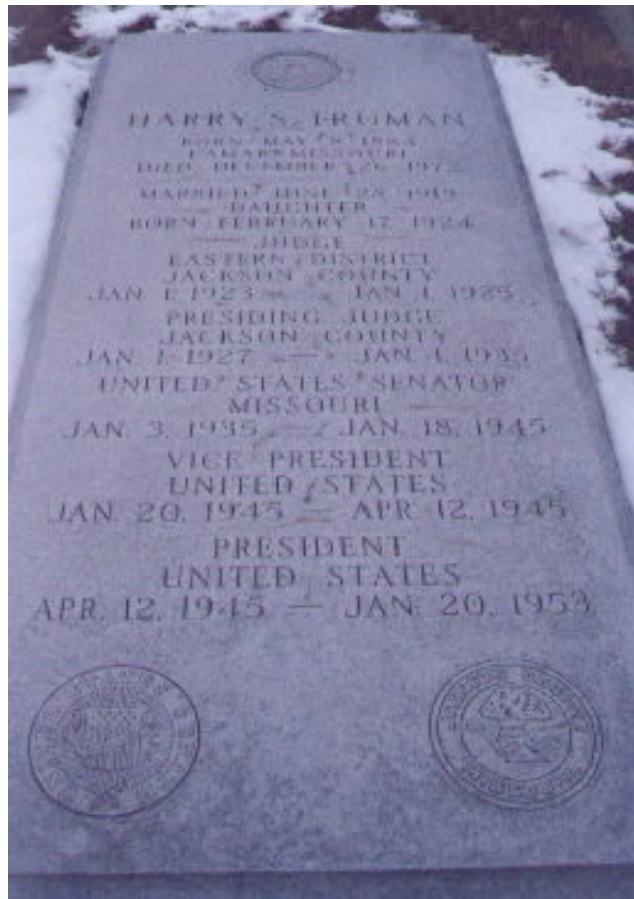


## “TRUMAN’S FUNERAL”

An Oration Delivered by Dr. Bing Johnson, 32° KCCH  
Orator of the Grand Junction Scottish Rite Bodies  
At the Consistory Meeting of November 19, 2007



Old age didn't come to MWB Truman gradually. When it came it was rapid, but he never lost his sense of humor.

Truman told his staff exactly where he wanted his final resting place on the Library grounds to be. He then said I want you to see that I have a Masonic Service as a part of my last resting place. The staff knew there would be an official recognition of his death when the time came, and it would be the Army's duty to carry it out for the President. From time to time Army personnel would come to the Library and look over the site. Truman jokingly told them he was going to out live all of them.

Mrs. Truman didn't initially warm up to the fact that he ought to have a Masonic funeral, but she was finally convinced and was glad she did.

On December 26, 1972 MWB Harry S. Truman died at 88 years of age. The last rites took place on December 28, 1972 mainly from the stage of the auditorium of the Harry S. Truman Library.

It is the right of every Mason to have a Masonic service. But, that was not to be. Despite his wishes the protocol that takes place with the death of a President didn't allow a Masonic funeral service.

The Masonic portion of his service was limited to five minutes. And he was almost deprived of that. Grand Master W. Hugh McLaughlin was told he would be limited to five minutes for his presentation to a nation wide television audience. The Grand Master was give an enormous task which he did in a masterful way with the time allotted and under the pressures he had to contend with. Many of the important points covered in the last rites of the Masonic Fraternity were woven into his address. The former Grand Master and President would have been pleased.

Just think how you would have performed this task had you be given this responsibility. The following are the exact words of the Grand Master who more than ably rose to the task.

“ The Grand Lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of the State of Missouri shares the grief and sorrow of Mrs. Truman and Mrs. Daniel and her family, Miss Mary Jane Truman and other family members in the loss of our beloved and cherished native son. This expression comes from the Grand Lodge officers and from more than 180,000 of his Masonic brothers in Missouri.

We express our gratitude to the family, to Father Lembeke, and to all other participants for the privilege of sharing in this service. We join, humbly and reverently, in paying lasting tribute to a great American and renowned world statesman.

Masons are taught to never to engage in any solemn, great or important undertaking with out first invoking the aid and blessing of Deity. Shall we pray?

We hail you, Supreme Architect of the Universe. We come to you with spirits bowed low and ask the bounty of Thy Grace and Mercy in our bereavement. May our deeds be such as to prepare us for entry into Your spiritual kingdom, that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Amen.

President Truman distinguished himself in many Masonic services, the most laudable of which was that of Grand Master of Masons of this State in 1940 and 1941. At that time he was also a member of the United States Senate. We express our gratitude to Mrs. Truman and Mrs. Daniel for sharing a portion of his exciting magnificent life with us. He was our brother by adoption. He was our companion by choice.

The tenants of a Mason's profession are Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth. There abide with us Faith, Hope and Charity. The greatest of these is Charity for it extends through the boundless realms of eternity. Our notable brother exemplified Charity in a universal way when he directed relief to be administered, on an unprecedented scale, to alleviate human degradation in the aftermath of World War II.

The lambskin or white leather apron is the badge of a Mason, more ancient than the Golden Fleece or Roman Eagle. It is white to admonish us to keep our personal lives pure, our exalted brother wore it proudly and worthily.

The beehive is a emblem of a Mason's industry. By it we are taught to be workers in the great hive of nature. Even in his later years our distinguished and beloved citizen practiced that teaching. No more striking example than this great edifice, named for him, in which he performed his labors, could conceivably be demonstrated to us today.

It is, therefore, fitting that we should assemble here to pay this deserved tribute. We, as Masons, extol his many virtues, not the least of which was his recognition of the high level of individual dignity. May we emulate him in his simple, sincere, sturdy and forthright conduct. May all our good intentions be crowned with success. May Brotherly Love prevail in all the earth and every moral and social virtue cement us.”

I could only add the words of St. Matthew who said “well done good and faithful servant.”

*Source:*  
*Roberts, A. E., BROTHER TRUMAN, Anchor Communitations. 1985*