



It has long been my habit to read the same author until I am tired of his writing approach. I don't think David McCullough could bore me. His historical work, as evidenced in *1776* and the Pulitzer Prize winning *John Adams*, thrilled me with the tales of extraordinary people in extraordinary times and their ability to do what they had to do. After reading those two books I had to find McCullough's *Truman* (the biography of Harry S. Truman).

Having been to Truman's presidential library in Missouri and having been born in 1947 during Truman's presidency, I had a feeling of kinship with this short, spunky midwesterner thrown into the turmoil that was 1945. I wanted to read about what it felt like to be thrust into Roosevelt's very large shoes on the advent of his death. What did it feel like to have the world suddenly look to you for leadership when your previous job had left you sitting, unhappily twiddling your thumbs.

Harry S. Truman turned out to be a fascinating read, leading you through the quiet years of turn of the century America, the turbulent years of WWI, the sad years of the Great Depression, and the horrific years of WWII. Truman would also be the first president to have to deal with the Cold War and yet another conflict, this time in Korea.

I learned that character will see you through. If you are lucky, you have built into your persona an emotional steel rod up your spine, which, like Truman, allows you to "stick to your guns." You will pardon the expression as Truman was an artillery man in WWI. He had all sorts of people coming at him in the White House to tell him what they wanted him to do. He would listen to the rare individual who made sense, like John Foster Dulles and would do battle with those who wanted to usurp power of the presidency, like Gen. Douglas McCarther.

One of my favorite stories from the book is his encounter with those who wanted to make Israel a country in the late 1940's. The United Nations was considering this action to carve out a place for Jews in Palestine, know to those Holocaust survivors as the Promised Land. What America thought would carry great weight at the U.N. Besieged by people begging Truman to vote yes, he was not sure what the position of the United States should be and was giving it careful thought. He did not like to be told what to do.

The Jewish leaders in America and in Israel brought in an old friend from Missouri who had run a store with Truman before his political days and used that friendship to try to convince Truman to vote yes. This man was very ill, and their conversations throw light on Truman's view of friendship and politics. Read the book to see how that turns out.

