



DEWEY DEFEATS TRUMAN  
"This is for the books"

BY  
DAVID M. HARTLEY

PRESENTED TO THE CHIT CHAT CLUB  
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA  
FEBRUARY 12, 2013

Triumph. That's the look on President Harry Truman's face, sheer, unadulterated triumph. In fact, of the countless politics-related photographs made over, say, the past century, one would be hard-pressed to point to another image that has remained as famous as W. Eugene Smith's iconic shot of an ebullient Truman holding aloft a copy of the Chicago Tribune emblazoned with the now-legendary erroneous headline: Dewey Defeats Truman.

The reason for the picture's immortality? It's not the headline itself — although that titanic error is, in its own way, terrifically enjoyable. Rather, the photo endures because of the look of unabashed, in-your-face delight in Truman's eyes. It may be the greatest photograph ever made of a politician celebrating victory. Here's one version of the rushed edition according to Tribune reporter, Tim Jones.

On Nov. 2, Election Day, the polls and the pundits left no room for doubt: Dewey was going to defeat President Harry S. Truman. And the Tribune would be the first to report it. The Tribune, which had dismissed Truman on its editorial page as a "nincompoop," was lulled into a false sense of security by polls that repeatedly predicted a Dewey victory. Critically important, though, were printers' and typesetters' strikes, which forced the paper to go to press hours before it normally would.

The headline might well have been quickly forgotten but for a chance encounter two days later in St. Louis. Truman, traveling by rail to Washington, stepped to the rear platform of the train and was handed a copy of the Tribune Bulldog edition. Truman said, "this is for the books", held the paper up, and photographers preserved the moment for history. It's what Smith's picture tells us about politics, photography and memory that raises the image from the merely great to the realm of the indispensable.

Seeing the image today in an age of 24/7 news, it's hard to believe that the

photograph was not made on election night. The notion that anyone would bother referencing a newspaper (a newspaper, of all things!) 48 hours after an event seems a bit absurd.

It's not that newsworthy events happened any slower back in the day than they do now. But the mechanisms for disseminating that information have gone through so many evolutions, that a news event from two days ago feels like something out of the past.

For the man in the photograph, both his victory and his opponents' (the Trib editors') humiliating mistake have been enshrined in a newspaper headline. The inescapable emotion in his face reflects not only the triumph of his political ideas in a hard-fought national contest, but his ability to revisit his election-night triumph by the simple act of gazing at a two-day-old paper.

In that light, perhaps Smith's photo is not the greatest picture ever made of a politician celebrating victory. Instead, it's the greatest picture ever made of a politician in the throes of remembering what sweet, improbable victory feels like. (Ben Cosgrove, the Editor of LIFE Magazine, wrote the history of the photo)

Why rekindle the Dewey and Warren versus Truman and Alben Barkley 1948 election? It's the first election I remember and I wanted to know more about it. Why did its outcome surprise and upset my Republican family? And while following 2012's endless primaries some 1948 'give 'em hell, Harry' was pretty appealing.

We will look at a few comparison between the campaigns of 1948 and the one just completed keeping in mind that over the years the ground rules changed dramatically: exit polls, \$2 Billion in campaign fundraising and 75% of the funds going to television, length of the campaign, barrage of information on the internet,

prepackaged conventions, the debates, Super PACs, corporate personhood, social networking, availability of instant fact and fiction news fact, swing state mania and private jets.

Next, several pages to flesh out Dewey and Truman; then a look at how 1948 was a watershed election and finally, return to the Tribune headline.

In what is generally regarded as the greatest upset in American political history, Truman beat the heavily favored Republican governor of New York by a substantial Electoral College margin, 303 to 189, but by fewer than three million votes in the popular total.

Sixty-five years apart Barack Obama and Truman came into their elections with low poll rating (Obama with 46% and Truman with 36%) and a shared enemy – the Congress, which they accused of serving the wealthy elite at the expense of the middle class. The Democrats in '48 claimed to represent interests of the people against special interests, as represented by the Republicans and the record of the 80<sup>th</sup> session of Congress. Substitute 112<sup>th</sup> session and you have Obama's focus as well.

In a parade of the unpopulars created by Times Union Blog the Internal Revenue Service had an approval 40 percent; Lawyers at 29 percent; President Richard Nixon during Watergate at 24 percent; Banks at 23 percent; the British Petroleum Oil Spill at 16 percent; Paris Hilton with 15 percent approval; 80<sup>th</sup> Do Nothing Congress 12% and the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress the least popular at 9%.

According to MSNBC the 112th Congress passed 219 pieces of legislation, the fewest since 1947. A big difference is the top income tax rate that Obama wants to raise to 39.6% was in 1948 at 82.1% for the top income. The 1948 tax on capital gains was 25%.

Republicans said, that Truman's "quarrel with the Eightieth Congress is not its failure to enact legislation, but a fundamental difference in Government philosophy. The President would fix wages, fix prices, expand Government spending, increase Federal taxes, socialize and nationalize medicine and generally regiment the life of every family, as well as agriculture, labor and industry, and his proposals would create an annual budget which could not be less than sixty billion dollars, which would make inflation inevitable and permanent." Today, John Boehner could make a similar charge.

So is Mitt Romney a successor to Tom Dewey? Maybe -- at least as far as public persona goes. There are several striking similarities between the former Massachusetts governor and the ill-fated New York governor who led the GOP to defeat in 1944 and 1948. Both were born in Michigan. They were considered excellent administrators. Michael Wines in the New York Times writes, "even Romney's harshest critics concede his competence and his grasp of Massachusetts problems and needs". Both were responsive to business and cut taxes. Nineteen times claims Romney. Their opponents put them on the defensive by labeling them as distant and not caring about the average American.

Romney is blessed with a happy marriage, movie star hair and a picture perfect family. He's the 21st-century Man in the Gray Flannel Suit, a corporate machine methodically working his way up the ladder while less disciplined rivals fall by the wayside. This description could apply to Dewey as well.

One time Republican candidate Mike Huckabee said that Romney looks like the guy who fired you.

Romney and Dewey had to run against the right wing of their party. A number of conservative leaders at the time were downright apoplectic at the thought of nominating Dewey – the personification of the dreaded moderate "Eastern

Establishment." The Empire State's governor for over five years by that time, Dewey had made his peace with the New Deal, accepting most of its basic tenets. Conservatives tried to derail Dewey – pushing Ohio's Robert Taft among others – but much like their Republican counterparts today, they remained divided and disorganized.

In '48 for the last time convention coverage depended on radio. TV changed our lives and of course it changed the presidential campaigns. TV was a business and candidates had to pay more for coverage. I guess print and radio media in the 1940s considered themselves to be more about public service than business. TV relies on ratings and has to condense long speeches and complex issues to simple sound bites and visuals. TV was good for drama, style, and media events with photo opportunities. Besides the differences of style and substance, TV reached out to the masses and a national audience by the 1952 conventions that it had no chance of doing with limited coverage in 1948.

At no time since 1948 have such a range of views been represented in a presidential election. Television was the most obvious cause of this change. The era of television saw a decline in the number of options and a descent into the kind of platitudes that characterized the latter stages of the Dewey campaign.

During their campaigns Obama and Truman both took controversial human rights positions that would pay election dividends. Obama announced support for gay marriage and proposed a hiatus for young undocumented residents. According to the New York Times his vote total included 75% of those identified as Gay voters and 75% of the Hispanic electorate. Truman in a similar way went after the Black vote.

By 1948, largely settled in key urban states 2.5 million northern Black voters now had to be taken seriously. Since World War I they had steadily migrated northward where they could not only hope to earn a better living – they could vote. Until the New Deal, Blacks and all Southerners tended to be Republican, but since 1932 Blacks had trended Democratic. During World War II a million blacks had migrated northward. Detroit's African-American population grew by 40 percent during the 1940s; San Francisco's by 237 percent.

In 1948, the Democratic Party splintered in part due to disagreement over treatment of Blacks. Those forming on the left wanted integration, those to the right continuing segregation.

To the left the Progressive Party was created afresh with the candidacy of Henry A. Wallace. Probably the century's furthest left major candidate, he had served as Secretary of Agriculture, Vice President of the United States, and Secretary of Commerce under Franklin D Roosevelt. In 1946 President Truman had fired Wallace as Secretary of Commerce when Wallace publicly opposed Truman's firm moves to counter the Soviet Union in the Cold War. The Progressives proposed stronger government regulation and control of Big Business. They also campaigned to end discrimination against Blacks and women, backed a minimum wage and called for the elimination of the House Un-American Activities Committee. They adopted a pacifist sentiment in response to the growing enmity with the Soviet Union. Wallace himself denied being a Communist, but he repeatedly refused to disavow their support, and at one point was quoted as saying that the "Communists are the closest thing to the early Christian martyrs."

The Progressives didn't carry any states. They didn't have a winnable electoral strategy. Their best chance was New York, home to Thomas Dewey and they hoped to take votes away from Truman especially from Black voters.

On the right the Southern Democrats who had bolted the Democratic Convention over the civil rights platform formed another political party, which they named the “States’ Rights” Democratic Party more commonly known as the "Dixiecrats." South Carolina Governor Strom Thurmond, who had led the walkout, became the party's presidential nominee. Coincidentally you may have read last week that Thurmond’s daughter Elsie Mae died. Her mother had been the family’s African – American maid.

The Dixiecrats hoped to win enough southern states to force the election into the House of Representatives. However, most southern Democratic officials refused any association with an undertaking that was clearly electoral folly. The Dixiecrats got 39 electoral votes and each of the splinter parties won around one million popular votes.

Because of the Progressives and in spite of the Dixiecrats, Truman by executive order ended discrimination in the military and created fair employment in the civil service. He garnered 77% of the Black vote in 1948 and from that time forward the great majority of Blacks have thought of themselves as Democrats

Feeling abandoned by their party, Southern Democrats began flocking in ever-larger numbers to the Republican standard. Regional realignment became an accomplished fact. The "solid south" still exists but, unlike 1948, it today belongs to the Grand Old Party.

This was the last election with routinely extemporaneous speeches of the “good old Joe” variety. Truman was berated for what he said in Eugene, Oregon about Stalin. “I like old Joe. He’s a decent fellow but he’s a prisoner of the Politburo. He can’t do what he wants to.” Truman could go after those who just happened to



be in the audience in Crestline, Ohio for example. “Two-thirds of you stayed home in 1946” he excoriated listeners, “and look what a Congress we got! That is your fault...If you people want to continue the policies of the Eightieth Congress, that will be your funeral.” In a major speech in Chicago on October 25th he equated the Republicans with the Nazis. He went beyond tough political discourse. It was a scurrilous, unfounded charge according to Zachary Karabell in *The Last Campaign How Harry Truman Won the 1948 Election*,

Candidates, however, still get off the teleprompter and into trouble. Obama’s “I’ve visited 57 states.” Or Romney arriving in London and questioning British preparedness for the upcoming Olympics.

In 1948, commercial air travel was in its infancy. Today candidates fly to where target voter groups are. In those days voters come to them in hundreds of stops at train stations and even along railroad sidings. Truman used an invitation to speak in June at the UC commencement in Berkeley as a tune up for the back of the train speeches that would be so effective in the campaign. Logistically the trip had been made easier, even comfortable by a wartime bequest that the Association of American Railroads had tendered to Franklin Roosevelt. Sold to the federal government for one dollar, the steel and concrete reinforced 285,000 pound railroad car, the Ferdinand Magellan, would be Truman’s for what would turn out to be a 9,905 mile, eighteen-state journey to California and back.

The Ferdinand Magellan provided a marvelous venue. According to David Pietrusza in *1948*, its blue-curtained and presidential–seal-bedecked rear platform boasted not only a lectern but also roof-mounted loudspeakers to amplify the president’s words whenever crowds might greet him. The White House’s gossamer official story held that this voyage was a non-political trip. Davi Piet writes, “The trip has been a rehearsal for the campaign to come. His easy air of

informality and confidence has developed gradually during the trip. After a few days he had acquired a style where it was not at all as if he were making a speech but as if he were leaning over the back platform chatting in man-to-man fashion. His language, at first reserved, took on saltiness..." At Berkeley's Memorial Stadium some 50,000 listened as Truman laid out the foreign polity of his administration. In San Francisco, the Pacific Union Club, across the street from the Fairmont Hotel, purposefully turned down the blinds on the side facing the president's suite.

Truman perfected a campaign of whistle stops - a derogatory term for a Podunk place with no regular train stops. In all the President traveled over 30,000 miles and made 352 speeches stops on the "whistle-stop" route. Dewey also campaigned from the back of "The Victory Special" train but gave fewer speeches and logged fewer miles. All in all some 12 to 15 million, about 10% of the total US population came out to see Truman. At the Dexter, Iowa "whistle-stop," Truman addressed 96,000 farmers attending the National Plowing Contest, noting "This Republican do-nothing Congress has already stuck a pitch fork in the farmers' back. Vote for your farms!"

Leonard Miall writing for the BBC recalls: "Yes. I remember on one occasion I was standing in the crowd, as I usually did on these occasions just to try and pick up comments and reactions of people at these whistle stops, and I heard a man in front of me say to the man next to him, 'I had no idea the President was such a handsome man.' And the other man said, 'Neither had I.' I inched my way around to the front and I found each of these chaps looked exactly like President Truman."

"No President in history had ever gone so far in quest of support from the people, with less cause for the effort, to judge by opinion polls" wrote David McCullough

in his book, Truman. Today's version of the personalized campaign is social media and the Internet not whistle stops. Obama was savvier than Romney in utilizing the web's vast potential. While Romney was supported by 7 million facebook users, Obama's number of supporters swelled to over 28 million.

Bill Batt, Research Division Chief of the Truman campaign explained, "We provided our local data through the WPA Guide, which was our secret weapon. The guides are a gold mine about every community of any size in the US. Truman was a bug on history. Newspapermen who traveled on both the Republican and Democratic trains were impressed by the fact that the President had something to say in each place and also had taken some trouble to brief himself on each area while Dewey's speeches all came out alike".

The 1948 GOP Convention started on Monday, June 21. Now conventions are held as late as September. It made for a more leisurely campaign, naps and bourbon and branch water during the sweltering temperatures in a time when air conditioning was less common. There wasn't the string of grueling primary elections. In 1948, there were only five true primaries – New Hampshire, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Ohio, and Oregon. Only Oregon was winner-take-all. Party Bosses and politicians selected nominees at the conventions.

The changing role of the Press

"If Mitt Romney loses the presidential election", said Mona Charen in NationalReview.com, "it won't be hard to figure out why. The Republican presidential nominee has faced perhaps the most corrupt and tendentious coverage in presidential history, with the mainstream media doing everything in its power to ensure that its darling, Barack Obama, is re-elected."

It was quite the opposite in 1948 where the publishers, most of them Republicans, supported Dewey. Life Magazine printed a large photo in its final edition before the election; entitled "Our Next President Rides by Ferryboat over San Francisco Bay". Newsweek polled fifty experts; all fifty predicted a Dewey win. "Several well-known and influential newspaper columnists, such as Drew Pearson and Joseph Alsop, wrote columns to be printed the morning after the election speculating about Dewey's possible choices for his cabinet. For its television coverage, NBC News constructed a large model of the White House containing two elephants that would pop out at the moment of the Republicans' victory.

In Chicago, the Tribune wrote that Mr. Truman is not only the worst President this country had; but also he has the least capacity for the office. While he is incapable of great betrayals, he is possessed of an invincible stupidity and a political morality that has never risen above the ghost voting and the draft of the Pendergast machine."

The normally Democratic leaning New York Times also endorsed Dewey, announcing: "Mr. Dewey is now running for the Presidency on a platform that takes for granted the survival and continuation of all the major reforms and innovations of the First Roosevelt Administration. There is no good reason to question the sincerity of this position."

Washington Post journalist Drew Pearson wrote "Governor Dewey had conducted one of the most astute and skillful campaigns in recent years. He made nobody mad. He called no names. He answered no challenges. He ignored many of the issues.

More than 500 newspapers, accounting for over 78% of the nation's total circulation, endorsed Dewey. While publishers used to control coverage

preferences, this practice has become negligible in recent years. Newspaper circulation has dropped by seven million in the last decade.

More pollers, more polls... still not an exact science

The Gallup National Tracking Poles were prominently mistaken in '48 and again in 2012. Radio comedian Fred Allen noted that Truman was the "first president to lose in a Gallup and win in a walk."

Alec Gallup reflected on the '48 election. "We stopped interviewing too early, about two and a half weeks, I think, before. And you can't do that. But there's also another factor that's not mentioned very often, the Wallace vote collapsed."

All three major pollsters—Gallup, Roper, and Crossley—throughout the election, predicted that Dewey would win by a landslide. The Roper poll even stopped surveys in September, so confident were they of Dewey's victory.

In late September, Dewey had a 17-point lead. In California Dewey-Warren operatives shuttered their San Francisco office in mid-October. They lost the city by 30,000 votes.

Truman on polls..."I wonder how far Moses would have gone if he'd take a poll in Egypt? What would Jesus Christ have preached if he'd taken a poll in Israel? I wonder how far Moss would have gone if he'd taken a poll in Egypt? What would Jesus Christ have preached if he'd taken a poll in Israel? Where would the Reformation have gone if Martin Luther had taken a poll. It isn't polls or public opinion of the moment that count. It is right and wrong and leadership – men with fortitude and honesty, and belief in the right that makes epochs in the history of the world."

Having picked Dewey to win by 6%, Gallup was severely embarrassed by Truman winning with 4.5% margin. Albert E. Sindlinger, who worked for Gallup, believes that Gallup's biased polls helped to defeat Dewey as it made the Republicans overconfident.

After the 2012 election the New York Times surveyed two dozen polling firms that had conducted five surveys in the final three weeks of the campaign. Those conducting surveys on line had good results. The firm with the widest margin of error was Gallup. In late October having been as far off as Romney by 7 percent they narrowed it to Romney by one...wrong winner and off by 3.6 percent.

It's no secret that the Romney campaign believed it was headed for victory on Election Day. Team Romney's internal polling showed swing states moving into his column. When combined with Ohio, where the internal polling had him close, Romney was on track to secure the 270 plus electoral votes needed to win. The confidence in these numbers was such that Romney even passed on writing a concession speech, at least before the crotchety assignment-desk known as "reality" finally weighed in (Noam Schrieber in The National Review.)

Romney got his pollster, Neil Newhouse, to speak a bit about what happened. Broadly speaking, the people who showed up to vote on November 6 were younger and less white than Team Romney anticipated, and far more Democratic as a result."

Here are a few Deweyisms, you may remember some others, starting with his famous, "If you're not in New York, you're camping out." It didn't help that New Yorkers had run for president in six consecutive elections. He was the first to run born in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. He was the last Republican candidate who needed more than one ballot to be nominated. Dewey was absent two front teeth knocked out in

a high school football game and sported a mustache that some say resembled Charlie Chaplin or Hitler. His wife Frances liked the way he looked and he liked that he could not be “handled”.

Dewey wanted to be an opera singer. His speaking voice matched FDR. With his baritone voice and courtroom theatrics he would like to have had more television exposure.

Like many men who appear gruff Dewey was more shy than stuffy, an almost painfully private person trapped in an unremittingly public profession according to Richard Norton Smith in his book *Dewey and his Times*. Truman makes friends without influencing people,' noted Arthur Schlesinger Jr., 'Dewey influences people without making friends.’’

Attributed to Alice Roosevelt Longworth was the question: ‘How can you vote for a man who looks like the bridegroom on a wedding cake?’ Dewey’s manner reinforced this unflattering image. He had a fussy speaking style, using exclamations like “good gracious”. He sometimes ended a sentence by saying, “period.” He was also stiff and unfriendly with newsmen, many of whom repeated the wedding cake comment to his detriment. It’s doubtful whether looking like a miniature bridegroom was a major factor in Dewey’s failure to get elected, but the assault on his dignity surely had some negative effect.

Earl Warren, Dewey’s reluctant running mate, simply did not care for Dewey. They had first met in 1939, and Warren’s initial impression was scathing: “a vain and hollow fellow”, he confided to his diary, “shifty and somewhat slimy...one of the most transparent frauds of all time.” Writes David Pietrusza in his book *1948* Earl Warren’s wife, Nina, voted for Truman. As for the Dewey imposed

campaign restraints, Warren said, "I just wish I could call someone an SOB." Warren did not carry California for the Republicans.

In 1944, in the "New Yorker" Stanley Edgar Hyman wrote "Life Magazine probably put an end to Governor Dewey's chances of the Presidency the other week when under a formal picture of Dewey in the executive chamber of the capitol building, Life's caption says: "The desk in his room is so large, the chair so deep that Dewey sits on two telephone books when being photographed here." "The picture of a postwar peace table, seating Churchill, Stalin, Chiang-Kai-shek and little Tom Dewey on two telephone books, is plainly impossible."

With his large lead in the polls, he played it safe. It left him vulnerable to being labeled irrelevant. "No presidential candidate in the future" opined the Louisville Courier-Journal, only marginally exaggerating "will be so inept that four of his major speeches can be boiled down to these historic four sentences: Agriculture is important. Our rivers are full of fish. You cannot have freedom without liberty. Our future lies ahead."

At a stop in Illinois Dewey was speaking from the rear platform of the train, which started backing up. No one was injured, but Dewey declared, the engineer "should probably be shot at sunrise, but we'll let him off this time since no one was hurt." Truman took full advantage of this, and announced that there were great train crews all across the nation, "they are all Democrats. Dewey objects to having engineers back up. He doesn't mention that under that great engineer, Hoover, we backed up into the worst depression in history."

By the late 1930s Dewey's successful efforts against organized crime—and especially his conviction of Lucky Luciano—had turned him into a national celebrity. His nickname, the "Gangbuster", became the name of a popular radio



serial based on his fight against the mob. Perhaps coming from his days as a prosecutor, Dewey always sat in a restaurant with his back to the wall.

Dewey was a thrifty liberal. Probably, he would have been a better president than a candidate. He was a fine governor in a badly run state. Great administrator, practical liberal, the first Republican governor in 20 years, he made New York into one of the most Republican states in the US. Dewey made government more responsive to business, pro civil rights, and the first state to pass anti-segregation legislation.

On the morning of November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5 foot 8 Dewey announced the little son of a bitch, 5 foot 9 Truman, had won. Unlike Obama in the 2012 election, running at a time of great prosperity and high employment helped Truman.

An election footnote, New Yorker writer Oden Meeker reported, “A wax figure of Thomas E. Dewey, completed before last fall's election, for post-Inauguration exhibition at Mme. Tussaud's gallery, has been melted down and remolded as Queen Juliana of the Netherlands...”

So what about Truman?

He was born in Lamar Missouri in 1884, and spent most of his youth on his family's farm. He was the last president not to get a college degree. During World War I, Truman served in combat in France as an artillery officer in his National Guard unit. After the war, he briefly owned a haberdashery and joined the Democratic Party political machine of Tom Pendergast in Kansas City, Missouri.

He had terrible eyesight and as he put it, I'm as "blind as a mole". As President he was subjected to: "I'm just mild about Harry", "to err is Truman", "Harry S. (stands for nothing) Truman", and "The Senator from Pendergast"

His acceptance speech for the Democratic nomination was the snarling and defiant harangue of a badly scared man," said H. L. Mencken. "The more he whooped and hollered the more manifest it was that he was fighting with his back to the wall."

Classic Truman is his response to the unfavorable review of the vocal recital of his beloved daughter Margaret. He fired off this letter to critic Paul Hume of the *Washington Post*: "I have just read your lousy review buried in the back pages. You sound like a frustrated old man who never made a success, an eight-ulcer man on a four-ulcer job, and all four ulcers working. I have never met you, but if I do you'll need a new nose and plenty of beefsteak and perhaps a supporter below. Westbrook Pegler, a guttersnipe, is a gentleman compared to you. You can take that as more of an insult than as a reflection on your ancestry." President Harry S. Truman

Truman's feisty campaign style energized his base of traditional Democrats, most of the South, Catholic and Jewish voters, and --in a surprise--Midwestern farmers. Thus, Truman's election confirmed the Democratic Party's status as the nation's majority party and its fifth consecutive victory.

The re-election of President Obama has this in common with Truman's victory: The stock market was not happy. And that's a rarity following an incumbent's re-election according to a report in the *New York Observer*. The Dow Jones dropped 5% the day after Obama's election in 2008, 3.8% after Truman's surprising win and after Obama won again in 2012 it fell 2%. Thus, the three worst post election days are 2008 (Obama), 1948 (Truman) and Obama again in 2012.

From the distance of 65 years it is tempting to romanticize 1948 as what our politics can be. It did offer people a range of the different visions of what America should be and for the most part it was waged on the issues. It is also a reminder of how rough American politics can be.

1948 helped create our modern campaign system. Zachary Karabell in *The Last Campaign* reports that Dewey appeared packaged and his campaign never allowed people to see the man behind the candidate. Truman campaigned as a real person, who joked with crowds and reporters and who was often carried away by his passion and his pugnaciousness.

In subsequent years, however, public taste shifted. People began to prefer the safe, smooth, photogenic candidate to the tell-it-like-it-is common man. Even in our most contentious recent elections, major candidates have refrained from speaking like Truman did. Today any utterance from a candidate can go viral in seconds. Sixty-five years ago even egregious remarks would likely get no more play than the local newspaper. No subsequent major candidate would compare with Truman for sheer demagoguery and character assassination. Saying that one party is out of sync with the country is not the same as saying that one party has betrayed, robbed and defrauded the American people.

Zachary Karabell in *The Last Campaign* summarizes Truman's second term. It began with the upset of the century, but it quickly turned sour. Nineteen forty-nine was a year of revolution in China punctuated by the detonation of the first Soviet atomic bomb. Nineteen fifty was worse. Between Korea, labor unrest, and the emergence of McCarthyism, Truman spent the remaining years of his term embroiled in constant crisis.

Yet the unraveling of the presidency during the second term was directly related to the way Truman won. That point was lost on people at the time. Truman made a devil's choice in order to stage his comeback. By unleashing his rhetoric Truman stoked class resentment and anger that he had successfully marginalized Dewey by caricaturing him. Dewey assisted in his own demise by refusing to defend himself. For the most part candidates will avoid character assassination and unbridled assaults not because they respect each other but out of self-interest. It is easy to call your opponent vile names and accuse him of sordid behavior, but it is difficult to defend yourself when your opponent does the same. Today, candidates usually avoid direct name-calling. It comes instead from their supporters.

Frequently, that reluctance dissipates when one side believes that it is on the verge of defeat. Then the possible benefits outweigh the costs. Because Truman seemed to be losing so early, he was less restrained from the outset. He was fortunate that Dewey chose not to meet Truman's tactics with an equivalent response. But other Republicans were not so forgiving or forbearing. They were enraged at how Truman campaigned. They believed that he had stolen an election that was rightfully theirs. Since he had played foul, they intended to play foul in return and when a senator from Wisconsin decided to make wild and unsubstantiated claims about communist penetration of the Truman administration. Party elders such as Robert Taft made no effort to stop him. Joseph McCarthy could never have pursued his destructive vendetta against the Democrats had the leaders of the Republican Party not supported him. Truman did not cause McCarthyism but to a far greater degree than is usually cited, he helped provoke it.

“Of the two main candidates who ran for president in 1948” continues Karabell, “Dewey was the harbinger of the future, while Truman was the last of his kind. For the final time, a pre-television candidate who cultivated an unpolished image, who gave ‘em hell and told it like it was, triumphed. For all of his rough edges,

Truman captured the hearts of voters in 1948, and he has since become an icon of honesty, integrity and grit. After the election Dewey mostly sat on the sidelines watching events that he had expected to shape. But forces larger than both of them were writing a different script than the one they played out in 1948. The cool, detached Dewey, the packaged candidate who ran so as not to lose, who steered clear of controversy, and who made a good show of appearing presidential – that was the model that Americans chose after 1948. ‘Dewey Defeats Truman,’ the famous headline, so memorable for being so wrong, may have had it right after all.”

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Jordan, David M. *FDR Dewey and the Election of 1944*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: University of Indiana Press, 2011

Karabell, Zachary. *The Last Campaign How Harry Truman Won the 1948 Election*. New York: Vintage Books, 2001

McCullough, David. *Truman*. New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1992

Pietrusza, David. *1948*. New York: Union Square Press, 2011

Smith, Richard Norton. *Thomas E. Dewey and His Times*. New York: A Touchstone Book Published by Simon & Schuster, 1982