

1945 April 9-15 Mourning the President

The La Crosse Tribune EXTRA

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Roosevelt Dead

Capital Shocked By F. R.'s Death First Lady Sends Messages To Sons, Leaves For Springs

WASHINGTON—(AP)—The death of President Franklin Roosevelt shocked Washington to its foundations today. From the man who now will become president—Vice President Harry Truman—down to the least of the city, the news was overwhelming.

Mrs. Roosevelt, after dispatching a widowed mother's message of strength to their four sons in service, prepared to fly to Warm Springs.

Service At Hyde Park
The capital prepared for a funeral in the east room of the White House Saturday.

The burial of the only man to serve three terms as president—only to die in the fourth month of his fourth term—is to be at Hyde Park, N. Y.

That is the home for which he said last year all that was within him cried out for.

A cabinet meeting was called immediately and Truman was presented 10 years ago as obscure county judge in Missouri. He would become the 32nd president.

The president's death was announced by his secretary, Stephen Early, who on Dec. 7, 1941, gave the world the news of the Pearl Harbor attack that plunged this country into war.

The White House called the three major news services at about 3:45 P. M. (EWT) on a conference call. There was a long pause.

"The President Died Suddenly"
Then Early came on the wire and made the electrifying announcement. His voice sounded fairly calm and measured, but he obviously was laboring under intense emotion.

His first words were—
"Here is a flash."
"The president died suddenly early this afternoon."
There was a sudden flurry among his listeners.

"You mean President Roosevelt," someone shouted over the line.

"Of course," Early replied. "There is only one president."
Although interpreted several times, he continued to restate what he said "some for the story."
"Is he no politician?" he explained.

"The president had not been in the best of health for some time," he stated today.

Learned This Had Happened
Last week at a banquet for Associate Justice Hugo Black of the supreme court Mrs. Roosevelt declined to attend because of her husband's Democratic leader, that the foot the president had been attacked had no later fact.

Secretary said he remembered that Mr. Roosevelt looked thin and tired, but thought that the one who said he was too thin, that he had been taking only great because he had no time for other foods.

When the death became known, he said that he had been in the White House grounds. They appeared to be in the White House grounds. They appeared to be in the White House grounds. They appeared to be in the White House grounds.

The night had the telephone switchboard was "hopelessly jammed with calls."



1882 FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT 1945

HEMORRHAGE FATAL AT WARM SPRINGS

WARM SPRINGS, Ga.—(AP)—President Franklin D. Roosevelt died suddenly at 3:35 p. m., CWT., today of a massive cerebral hemorrhage.

Commander Howard Bruenn, naval physician, made this announcement to reporters shortly after White House Secretary William D. Hassett called a hurried news conference to announce the death of the nation's only fourth-term chief executive.

Mr. Roosevelt died in the little White House on top of Pine mountain where he had come for a three-week rest. He was 63 years old.

Dr. Bruenn said he saw the president this morning and he was in excellent spirits at 9:30 a. m.

News of the president's death spread like wildfire around the foundation and atop an adjoining mountain where guests were gathering for a barbecue.

Died Without Pain

The president's late arrival for the barbecue caused some enmity. A telephone call was put through and a few minutes later representatives of the Associated Press, United Press and International News Service were told to rush immediately to the Carver cottage on the foundation grounds for some news.

In response to a question, Dr. Bruenn said the president died without pain.

News of the president's death spread quickly and caused many a tear among the 125 infantile paralysis patients at the foundation here.

Mayor Frank W. Allcorn of Warm Springs was giving a barbecue at his mountain cabin this afternoon for the president and about 50 other guests. Allcorn was awaiting the president's arrival when reporters got word through the army signal corps radio telephone and summer White House telephone communication to rush to the foundation.

"At one o'clock," Bruenn added, "he was sitting in a chair while sketches were being made of him by an architect. He suddenly complained of a very severe occipital headache (back of the head)."

"Within a very few minutes he lost consciousness. He was seen by me at 1:30 P. M., fifteen minutes after the episode had started."

"He did not regain consciousness and he died at 3:35 P. M."

Only others present in the cottage were Comdr. George Fox, White House pharmacist and long an attendant on the president; Hassett, Miss Grace Tully, confidential secretary, and two cousins, Miss Laura Delano and Miss Margaret Suckley.

Bruenn said he called Vice Admiral Ross T. McIntyre, navy surgeon general and White House physician, in Washington and that McIntyre in turn called Dr. James E. Paullin, of Atlanta, an internal medicine practitioner and honorary consultant to the navy surgeon general.

Paullin was present when Bruenn gave the statement of the cause of death to reporters of the three national news services.

Hassett gave newsmen the first announcement. So insistent was Secretary Hassett that the news be made public immediately that details were left for future announcement.

The president, the nation's first chief executive to break the two-term tradition, had planned to stay here another week, then he was to return to Washington and spend one day before taking a train to San Francisco to

Truman Sworn In As President Of Nation

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Tremendous Tasks Confront 32nd Leader Of United States

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New President Confident He Can Handle Nation's Burdens

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Fly Flaps At His Mayor's Plea

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Tragic Hour

AMERICA IS SO SHOCKED AT THE MOMENT TO SPEAK.

The people can think only of the stirring tragedy of the death of their president—Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Probably mingled with this gripping sorrow are many questions arising as to the impact of the tragedy upon the world in its current state—with so much of immediate developing, perhaps just around the corner.

This is indeed, a tragic hour to lose the Chief of State.

But as many of these questions as arise, as they already have and will, the deep and abiding confidence of America is that we shall somehow work it out.

These are matters, however, for consideration at a later time. America would much prefer to remain alone with her grief at the moment.

America bows humbly and sorrowfully in the order of this hour.

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(La Crosse Tribune extra edition, 1945 April 12, page 1)

With victory in Europe less than a month away, the United States lost its Commander-in-Chief. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the four-term president who had led the country through 12 years as difficult as any in its history, died on Thursday, April 12, 1945, in Warm Springs, Georgia. He was 63 years and 72 days

old.¹ The reassuring voice that had reached out to American homes through their radios during the Great Depression, the determined voice that addressed the nation after Pearl Harbor, and the confident voice that guided the nation through the most destructive war in human history was silenced.

After Roosevelt died of a "massive cerebral hemorrhage" at 3:35 p.m. Central War Time, a naval physician announced the death to reporters at a hasty news conference in Warm Springs. The president had been in the midst of a three-week vacation at the 2,000-acre Warm Springs Foundation for polio treatment that he had helped establish more than 20 years previously.²

Radio networks spread the stunning news to the nation. In La Crosse, people called the telephone company and *The La Crosse Tribune* to verify what they had heard. The La Crosse Telephone company reported a record of 11,448 phone calls between 5:00 p.m. and 6 p.m. One operator said the switchboard "looked like a Christmas tree" with all the lights on during that hour in which each operator handled an average of 458 calls.³ Mayor Joseph J. Verchota issued a proclamation directing all businesses to fly flags at half-staff and all church bells in the city be rung in honor of the late president. Workers at several defense plants in the city wandered into the streets in disbelief.⁴

Corporal Thomas Rose of La Crosse, hospitalized in Battle Creek, Michigan after losing both of his legs in combat in France in 1944, had to be told twice that the news was true before he could believe it. Rose said, "He's the best guy we ever had---voted for him from the hospital in England after I was hurt."⁵

The La Crosse Tribune responded with a four-page extra edition later that day. The first three pages provided details of Roosevelt's death and a review of his 12-year presidency.⁶ The regular edition on Friday, April 13, provided more highlights of his presidency and the announcement of funeral services the next day. President Truman called for a national day of mourning on Saturday but no slackening of effort in war production.⁷

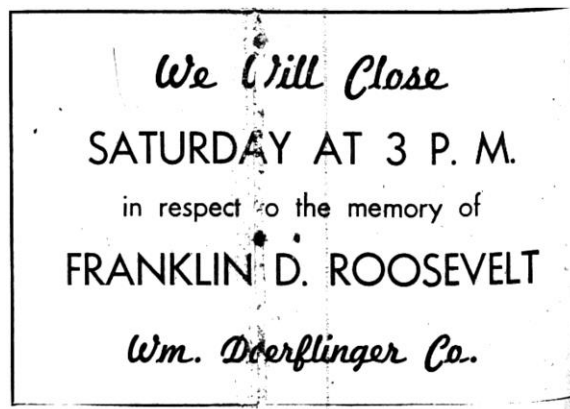
Flying flags at half-staff was an expression of respect for a public servant then as it is now. President Truman directed that flags on public buildings remain at half-staff until the end of business on Monday, May 14.⁸ The flag on top of Grandad's Bluff in La Crosse was one of those flying at half-staff.⁹ All Boy Scout troops in the Gateway Area council kept their flags at half-staff for thirty days in recognition of President Roosevelt's support for the Boy Scouts.¹⁰

Both public and Catholic schools in the city held memorial assemblies on Friday, April 13.¹¹

On the same day, the *La Crosse Tribune* published an editorial expressing the nation's "indescribable" sense of personal loss. It pointed out the tragedy of Roosevelt not living to see the victory over Germany and Japan that seemed all but inevitable at that time, but it also acknowledged the visible decline in his health over the past months. The piece praised Roosevelt's courageous leadership that took on the status quo at home and evil abroad.¹²

The La Crosse Federation of Churches announced that all churches would be open on Saturday from 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. for prayer services.¹³

Mayor Verchota asked La Crosse businesses, as much as possible, to close during President Roosevelt's funeral on Saturday, April 14, at 3:00 p.m., Central War Time.¹⁴



(La Crosse Tribune, 1945 April 13, page 12)

On Saturday, April 14, much of La Crosse was shut down. Most businesses were closed from 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. The federal building, including the post office, closed for the day at 1:00 p.m. All taverns were closed from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. Church bells in La Crosse tolled for the whole hour that Roosevelt's memorial service was going on in Washington, D.C.¹⁵

"Dottie," the author of the weekly "A Letter From Home," summarized the reaction in La Crosse for local men and women serving in the armed forces.¹⁶

Regardless of where you have been this week the news of President Roosevelt's death must have struck you with the same empty feeling that jolted us Thursday afternoon when we first learned that our nation's leader had died.

In a single stroke the people of the world stopped their ordinary thoughts and paid universal honor to Mr. Roosevelt. We of the younger generation grew up with him as our leader and have come to regard his fearless acts as a symbol of the dauntless courage of America. All over the world oppressed peoples have been looking toward him as the leader of a free land for brave people.

Business concerns closed their doors during the funeral hour on Saturday and La Crosse people attended prayer services at the various churches. Homage was paid to Mr. Roosevelt in general memorial assemblies in the schools on Friday. Flags are flying at half mast now and on Saturday the church bells tolled his death knell.

In spite of the distressing news, activities went on as usual Thursday night. People attended theaters and night spots but with subdued gaiety. St. Olaf's choir presented a program of sacred music at the Vocational school. From my seat in the balcony the sight of the group was notable—the entire chorus, save two, appeared to be of Scandinavian descent by their Nordic skin and blonde hair, as was the namesake of the college and choir. Two dark haired singers, American born Japanese, stood out in striking contrast to the fair blondes, but all voices blended into a harmonious whole. Dressed in purple robes, they made a beautiful sight as their voices filled the air with splendid songs.

(La Crosse Tribune, 1945 April 15, page 4)

The three days from death to burial was quick by today's standards for world leaders, but there was a war on.

We Shall Carry On

As calamity often times reveals the measure of an individual, so also it reveals the measure of a nation. Thus it is that the sudden death of the man who for more than twelve years guided the destinies of our land, may unite Americans in even greater purposefulness and achievement, even as the unexpected thrust at Pearl Harbor determined our nation to miracles of war achievement.

President Roosevelt's death has come at a time that finds many of us weary of the struggle. The zest has gone out of our many-phased civilian war effort—the War Loan, the salvage drives, the Red Cross volunteer work. All this has long since become routine.

We are tempted to indulge in self pity for the bad luck of having been born in a century that offers so little of individual happiness, so much of sacrifice and torment. The world has grown increasingly grim. Nothing seems worth the struggle.

The death of President Roosevelt might tempt us to even greater pity at our lot. But indications are that it will do just the opposite. Capital reporters seem unanimous in the conviction that the nation is determined to carry on, if anything more vigorously than before, to final and complete victory and a more enduring peace.

The loss of one so eminently well versed in the international situation, so thoroughly fitted to represent his nation at the momentous conferences ahead, is a tragedy indeed. But Americans will make it even greater reason for steadfast and united effort toward the goals Roosevelt sought—world peace, freedom, and a better life for the common man.

(*The Nonpareil Journal*, West Salem, Wisconsin, 1945 April 19, page 4)

Vice-President Harry S. Truman, a veteran of World War I, was suddenly thrust into the role leading the Allies to finish the job of defeating the Axis in World War II and ensuring a peaceful post-war world.

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Sources & Notes:

¹ Joseph Nathan Kane, *Facts About the Presidents* (New York: Ace Books, 1976), 338-349.

² "Roosevelt Dead," *La Crosse Tribune* Extra, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 April 12, page 1. President Roosevelt had decreed year-round Daylight-Saving Time that was observed from February 9, 1942 to September 30, 1945. The time zones in the United States were "Eastern War Time," "Central War Time," etc., according to Konstantin Bikos, "Daylight Saving Time (DST) in the USA," *Timeanddate.com*, accessed 2020 April 13, <https://www.timeanddate.com/time/us/daylight-saving-usa.html>.

³ "Business Places In La Crosse To Close Saturday Afternoon," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 April 13, page 1.

⁴ "Fly Flags At Half Mast Is Mayor's Plea," *La Crosse Tribune* Extra, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 April 12, page 1.

⁵ "State Leaders Pay Tribute To Roosevelt," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 April 13, page 11.

⁶ *La Crosse Tribune* Extra, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 April 12.

⁷ "Death Ends Roosevelt's Career," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 April 13, page 1.

⁸ *La Crosse Tribune*, 1945 April 13.

⁹ "Grandad's Symbol of Mourning," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 April 15, page 1.

¹⁰ *La Crosse Tribune*, 1945 April 13.

¹¹ *La Crosse Tribune*, 1945 April 13. For details of the services at Logan and Central high schools, see: "City Business Places Close," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 April 14, page 2.

¹² "The Chief of State," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 April 13, page 4.

¹³ *La Crosse Tribune*, 1945 April 13.

¹⁴ *La Crosse Tribune*, 1945 April 13.

¹⁵ "City Business Places Close," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 April 14, page 2.

¹⁶ "A Letter From Home," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 April 15, page 4.